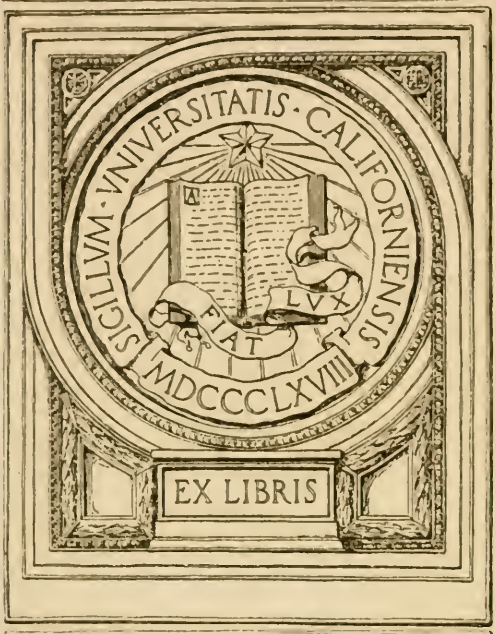
MEMOIR OF
SIR JOHN McNEILL, G.C.B.

GIFT OF
JANE K. SATHER



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MEMOIR OF THE RIGHT HON:
SIR JOHN McNEILL, G.C.B.
AND OF HIS SECOND WIFE
ELIZABETH WILSON

John. McNeill
1822.

MEMOIR OF THE RIGHT HON.

SIR JOHN McNEILL, G.C.B.

AND OF HIS SECOND WIFE

ELIZABETH WILSON

BY THEIR GRAND-DAUGHTER

WITH PORTRAITS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.
1910

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TO

MISS MARGARET WILSON

LADY McNEILL'S NIECE

THIS STORY OF TWO NOBLE LIVES IS OFFERED
BECAUSE IT OWES ITS EXISTENCE TO HER
ENCOURAGEMENT AND INTEREST

290698

PREFACE

My grandfather's name, in its connection with Persia, is well known to students of the history of what we now call the " Middle East."

To those, also, who have studied the history of the inauguration of the Scottish Poor Law and the amelioration of the condition of the Highland crofter during the potato famine, his name and that of his brother, Lord Colonsay, are not unknown.

It was, however, as the head of the Commission sent to the Crimea to inquire into the causes of the terrible sufferings of the British army there that his name was most prominently brought before the public. The dignified and proud silence which he preserved during the controversy that raged round that subject has been practically unbroken, and now, for the first time, his side of the story is made public.

Originally I collected the letters and papers, and studied the books from which this double Memoir is compiled, with a view to putting together the story of my grandparents' lives for the use only of the younger generation of their descendants and relatives, who have hitherto had no opportunity of knowing what high standards of conduct John and Elizabeth McNeill set before them, and how strenuously they did their best. As the work progressed, however, I found that the public aspect of Sir John McNeill's life quite overshadowed the private interest. He himself thought of himself firstly as a public servant, and of his powers and capabilities as instruments to be used for the public welfare.

My grandmother, too, home-loving and domestic by nature as she was, had to bow to public necessity and live, not as she liked, but as the country demanded of her ; and she contributed in no small degree to the success of her husband's efforts.

Much of their work seems to have been unavailing : Russian troops are even now occupying Persian territory ; the signatories of the recent Minority Report of the Poor Law Commission are even now stumping the country preaching the abolition of the Poor Law; the fallacy that a crofter can maintain his family by the proceeds of his croft alone, and far removed from any market for his labour, seems as deeply rooted in the minds of modern legislators as ever.

But that which can never be swept away is the moral effect of these two good lives ; and if this story helps to preserve their memory, I shall be satisfied.

I offer most grateful thanks to the many friends who have helped by lending books and letters, and by criticizing and encouraging ; to Messrs. W. Blackwood and John Murray for looking up for me those articles in *Blackwood's Magazine* and the *Quarterly Review* written by my grandfather ; and especially to the officials of the Advocates' Library in Edinburgh for their unfailing courtesy in finding the books which would give the information I required.

The spelling of names in the various documents quoted has not been altered or co-ordinated, except in a very few instances, such as in the familiar word " Ali," which in the old letters usually has an unfamiliar appearance, being written " Alee."

F. M.

DUNFIUNARY,
CONNEL,
ARGYLL,
16th February, 1910.

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CHAPTER I

EARLY LIFE

1795—1816

JOHN MCNEILL, son of John McNeill, Laird of Collonsay,* was born in that beautiful island on the 12th August, 1795.

The McNeills of Collonsay are descended from Torquill McNeill of Taynish, Keeper of the Castle of Sween, Knapdale, Argyle, in 1449. They owned, at different periods, the lands of Gallachallie, Arichonan, and Crear; but on the 6th March, 1701, Malcolm McNeill, eldest lawful son of Donald McNeill of Crear, got a "disposition" of the lands of Collonsay and Oronsay, which his father had already acquired, from Archibald, Earl of Argyle. There is a legend that they turned out the McDuffies or McFees, who had owned it, at the point of the sword, exterminating that clan; but in any case the McNeills had been in peaceful possession for some time when the father of the subject of this memoir purchased the islands from his cousin, Archibald McNeill, and, removing his family from the smaller island of Oronsay, which he had hitherto farmed, took up his residence in the "Big House" of Killoran.

Young John was third of the nine children—six sons and three daughters—born to Hester and John McNeill. His mother, whose maiden name was also McNeill, came from Dunmore, on West Loch Tarbert, her father, Captain Duncan McNeill, having inherited that property through

* In the older letters "Collonsay" is always spelt thus.

his mother, Julia MacMillan of Dunmore. Mrs. McNeill, the Laird's mother (*née* Macdougall of Dunollie), also moved from Oronsay to Baleromin Dubh, a new house near the port of Scalasaig, in Collonsay, which her son had built for her. One of the Laird's brothers, the "Uncle Malcolm" of the children, lived with his mother at Baleromin Dubh, but later went to Islay, where he had a distillery.

It is not easy to picture the life of the young McNeills in their island home 100 years ago, especially as the failure of the kelp trade and the agricultural losses caused by the adoption of Free Trade have greatly altered the state of the people since then. We know, however, that the population was much greater than it is now. In 1792 the number is given as 718 souls, in spite of considerable emigration to Carolina and Prince Edward Island having taken place previously.* All were, of course, tenants, and mostly on small holdings.

The schools, which were conducted in Gaelic, were those provided by the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge. The church was built after 1792, but there was no resident minister. One from Jura received £50 to go over to conduct services in it eight times a year. He usually did so only in summer, or when there was a marriage or a school examination to attend to. Communication with the outer world was irregular, and only by open sailing-boat.

The following account, kindly sent by Donald Mackinnon, M.A., a Colonsay man, Professor of Celtic Languages, Literature, and History at the University of Edinburgh, makes clear the conditions existing at the time.

He says: "My recollection goes back to the year of the potato failure in 1846, and I believe I am right in saying that the conditions of life which prevailed in Colonsay during your grandfather's boyhood continued practically unchanged down to that time.

* See "Old Statistical Account," vol. xii., pp. 329, 330. By census of 1901, population was 313.

"Before your great-grandfather, the old Laird, as we were taught to call him, purchased the estate from his cousin, there was a substantial tenantry in Machrins, Balnahard, Kilchattan, and elsewhere, who lived in rude comfort on their holdings. Those in the lower end of Kilchattan, near the sea, were the least affected by the changes which then took place. The soil was of the best, and the holdings were less contracted than elsewhere. There the tenants were decently comfortable and able to stand the shock of the potato failure. But they all, except my own father's family, emigrated to Canada in 1852 or thereabouts, and, as it happens, I believe I am the only person now living in this country who was brought up on what was the very substantial croft of Colonsay in old days.

"The staple food of the island from, say, 1740 to 1846 was the potato. The root was largely grown, and, besides feeding a numerous population, was exported in considerable quantities. Barley, or rather bear, was also a favourite crop. The soil was found to be particularly suitable to this form of cereal. . . . There were several small stills where the people made whisky, drank, and sold it—duty free, of course; but one of the first acts of the old Laird, as proprietor, was to unroof the last of these, and there has been no distillation of whisky in Colonsay since. The proprietor grew barley in large quantities, which was sent to the distilleries in Islay. My father and his neighbours paid their rents with the barley they grew, and sold in the same way. Oats was a common crop, and there was a reasonable supply of oatmeal for porridge and cakes. There was a good mill, but the quern was used in emergencies within my time. Rye ceased to be grown before I remember, but flax was cultivated in the forties. The Colonsay women of those days were very skilful in dressing and spinning flax, and, if I mistake not, home-made linen was in the mansion-house in your own day.

"Goats were reared in Colonsay in your grandfather's

time, but not in mine. The people made cheese, for the most part, from the goats' milk. There were but few sheep in the island until the farms were let in 1858-1860. The proprietor kept some 200 or so in Oronsay and Balnahard, and the tenants of Lower Kilchattan had about fifteen or twenty sheep each. That was all. My old neighbours ate the increase of their sheep, and made cloth and plaiding of the wool. The proprietor's stock was used in the same way in his own household, and by a large number of people in his employment. Pigs were reared in considerable numbers, and occasionally sold out of the island. Fowls and eggs were, of course, common. A few were sent to market ever since I remember, but hardly, I should say, when your grandfather was a boy. Fowls and eggs formed a small item of the rent of the tenantry, under the local name of ' mod.'

" The island was for long famous for its black cattle. The old Laird's herd, as that of his son and successor, Lord Colonsay, was one of the most famous in Scotland. The tenants' cattle in my boyhood were rather inferior. The people used to bleed the cattle in spring—a practice which ceased before old Sir John's day. I once heard an old man say that he had witnessed the practice. A cow-beast was killed occasionally, and salted for winter use. The hide was tanned and made into shoes. I wore several pairs of such. Rabbits must have been introduced into the island pretty early. Dr. Walker (vol. ii., p. 179) says that 130 dozen rabbit-skins were sold in Glasgow off the Killoran warren in the year 1764. The flesh of a rabbit sold for twopence until about forty years ago, when the trappers began to send flesh and pelt to the Southern market. Rabbits and mutton, especially the former, were the staple animal food for the last 140 years.

" Salted cod and ling were mostly exported, but flounders, plaice, and saithe were caught in large numbers, and considerable quantities of these were salted for winter use. So, to a less extent, were sand-eels. The

delicious trout of the loch went mostly to the mansion-house, but there was a deal of poaching. Seal-oil was used very largely for greasing wool, and also for light, especially in the mansion-house. The skins made excellent tobacco-pouches, among other things. I never heard of the seal-flesh being eaten in Colonsay—probably it was not within your grandfather's day—but the natives of Tiree ate seal-flesh some 200 years ago, and very likely the Colonsay people did the same. The seals were then, as now, in large numbers. Dip-candles and oil extracted from saithe-liver, and burnt in the old-fashioned *cruisgean*, with a wick taken from the common rush, provided light in the cottages of winter nights.

" Shell-fish was largely used for food, especially whelk and limpet. Whelks are now sent mostly to the South. Then there were the spout-fish, cockles, lobsters, and crabs, which could be got in considerable numbers at low ebb-tides. The lobster is now, for many years, fished for the market. The people ate dulse very frequently, and also ' mother of dulse,' as we called *carrigeen*, more sparingly, both in raw state. Sloke was cooked in the mansion-house in your own time there.

" Generally, the people lived pretty much as they did in the neighbouring islands, but very few of the islands provided such variety of food-stuffs as Colonsay within reach of the whole population. Little money passed. Labour was abundant and very cheap. Within my own time a man could be hired for £5 a year and a girl for £2. Unskilled labour fetched a shilling per day without food, eightpence with a meal or two. The rent rose slowly after the farms were let (about 1860), but the first spring of consequence in the labour-market was in the early seventies. Nowadays, what with the decreasing population and Southern competition, the farmer finds it difficult to secure labourers at considerably enhanced wages. I think you may take it for a fact that in your grandfather's boyhood the staple food in the mansion-house, as in the cottage, was the produce of the island, only in

the former the quality was superior, the supply constant, and the cooking better. There was no loaf bread, but flour-meal was common in the mansion-house, rare in the cottage. Rarer kinds of food, like clothes other than homespun, came to the mansion-house from the South as the irregular communication permitted. I do not know the exact date when tea was introduced into the island. It was a rare luxury in the cottages as late as 1850. So far as I can gather, the beverage was regularly used by the old people in your grandfather's early home in Oronsay, but I much doubt whether it entered into the daily fare of the boys. Milk, on the other hand, and its various preparations—butter, cheese, curds, cream, etc.—most certainly did."

Mrs. McNeill was a remarkable woman, far-seeing, and, it is said, ambitious for her handsome sons. It was her task to educate them till they went to college, and right well she must have done it.

The beauty of their sea-girt possession cannot have been without its effect on these children of a Celtic race. They had miles of moor to wander over; heather-clad hills, wild natural woods, cliffs and caves to explore; beautiful stretches of yellow sand, with the whole roll of the Atlantic breaking upon them; and many other joys not known to the town-bred child. No doubt, as they grew older they took interest in all the farming operations—the threshing, potato-growing, haymaking, etc.—and also in the peat-cutting, fishing, kelp-burning, and other employments of their humbler neighbours. The girls would learn to spin, and the boys would be out fishing by moonlight for the silvery sand-eel, or by day for the pink-fleshed trout.

Years afterwards John McNeill wrote to his wife from abroad: "You must visit all my haunts in Collonsay—the caves, the hawthorn-tree (now desolate), the precipices on the western coast about 'Urikay,' and the lanes of Esdale. You do not know how much you are interested in seeing them, for they were the haunts of my days

of youthful romance, in which you played a prominent part ; and when you see them, you will admit that a fitter scene for the first aspirations of an imagination excited by the development of the affections and the dawnings of ambition, which always make a man solitary and sad, could hardly be found."

Colonsay is an island of exceptional beauty and interest, having a wonderful variety of scenery within its nine miles of length. In Oronsay there is an old monastery founded by St. Columba, which was afterwards the seat of a priory of Canons Regular of St. Augustine. The ruins of the old chapel, the beautiful carved cross, the carved tombs of the old Abbots, could not fail to have their share in the awakening of John McNeill's mind. In another letter to his wife, speaking of Oronsay, he says : " That grey monastery and the grey precipice behind it give a solemn air to the whole vicinity of the dwelling, which has a calming and soothing effect on our minds, and prepares us to enjoy the sparkling sward and the sands of the sea more, and to say, ' Thank God for everything one sees and all one enjoys !' " Colonsay was always to him the dearest place on earth.

He was considered delicate and consumptive as a child, but his life was a healthy and happy one, running free, and probably barefooted, with brothers and sisters over their little kingdom, learning to love every nook and cranny, rock and tree, lords of all they surveyed, yet friends and intimate with all the people whose language and whose clan were their own.

Their interests were not entirely confined to home and island matters, and, in spite of the remoteness and infrequent communication, they kept in touch with the stirring events of the times. The Laird and his two eldest sons, Alexander and Duncan, when on their way to St. Andrews, where the boys were to be placed at the University in 1805, happened to arrive in Glasgow the day the news of the Battle of Trafalgar reached the city. The cheering and joyful clamour made an impression on

the lads, but the hush that followed as news came of the death of Lord Nelson they never forgot. John did not leave Colonsay till his twelfth year, and his wonder and admiration upon first seeing the town of Greenock, where he arrived in a sailing-vessel, were great. It must have been a strange experience to a boy brought up where everyone knew him to find himself in streets with hundreds of people whose faces were strange, and who made no sign of recognition or respect, such as he had, no doubt, been accustomed to. He was boarded for a time with the Rev. George Jardine, M.A., Professor of Logic at Glasgow University, probably as a private pupil, but he soon followed his brother Duncan to St. Andrews University.

On a window-pane in No. 25, South Street, St. Andrews, "John McNeill, from Collonsay, Argyleshire," cut his name with a diamond, and dated it "1807-8-9." The records of the "United College" show that he was a pupil in the Junior Latin and Junior Greek class 1807-8; Senior Latin, Senior Greek, Junior Mathematics, and Logic, 1808-9; and Senior Greek, Senior Latin, Senior Mathematics, and Ethics during 1809-10. Three of his certificates, which have been kept, and which are signed by "James Hunter," "Jo. Hunter," and "Rob. Haldane, Profr. of Mathematics," say that "His conduct was such as to merit approbation; that he applied to his studies with Diligence, and afforded satisfactory Proof of good abilities and Proficiency; that they had reason to be satisfied with the regularity of his attendance, and entertain a most favourable opinion of both his Talents and Dispositions." One can imagine what pleasure these certificates must have given to the parents, the grandmother, and the uncle at home, as well as to the proud possessor himself, who was still only fifteen years of age.

There is nothing to show what influenced John in selecting the profession of medicine, but he entered the University of Edinburgh as a medical student probably in the autumn of 1811, and attended the classes of John

RUINS OF THE OLD PRIORY IN ORONSAY.

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Bell, F.R.S., Lecturer on Anatomy and Surgery. The records of the University show that he "attended Institutes of Medicine or Physiology, Practice of Medicine and Materia Medica during the session 1812-13, and matriculated 19th July, 1814."

In after-years he described to his niece, Miss Margaret Wilson, how anxious and doubtful he felt the day of his matriculation. In his examination thesis he had, with that characteristic confidence in his own discernment which was to stand him in such good stead in future years, taken an independent view of the test subject, and one which he knew was in opposition to the opinion of his master, John Bell, so he greatly feared this would militate against his chance of passing. It was then the correct thing to appear before the examiners in full dress—*i.e.*, knee-breeches and silk stockings. Determined to be as little conspicuous as possible should he fail, John McNeill employed a caddie to carry a bag containing his plain clothes to Picardy Place, where the examination was held, which he intended to change into should he not have passed. Fortunately the result was favourable, and a very handsome lad he must have looked as he came out, all anxiety relieved, and the pleasure of success showing in his face.

There is a record of his having that autumn taken two college friends—James Wilson* and a young German named Lappenberg (afterwards Dr. Lappenberg, Recorder of Hamburg)—with him to Jura and Colonsay. It seems probable that the party of young people in the island was increased by the addition of young friends not infrequently.

John McNeill was very tall and very active—"a gay and limber youth, as wild with glee as any mountain fawn," with "redundant locks, glossy as a raven's wing," was said of him. In later years he himself said: "The time has been when I have cleared a good fifteen feet over a

* Author of "Illustrations of Zoology," "The Rod and Gun," etc.

peat bog with my gun, shot-belt, and game-bag far from being empty." He once made a wager that he would walk from Edinburgh to Glasgow and back in twenty-four hours, and he accomplished this remarkable feat. The distance is forty-four miles each way. As he reached Princes Street on his return he was sick, but attributed it to his having eaten too hearty a lunch in Glasgow. Report says that he attended a ball that same night, but was very ill afterwards.

During his Edinburgh student days he probably lived in his mother's house. She had wisely thought it worth while to make a home for her sons in town, and though their means were somewhat hampered by the purchase of the Colonsay estate, she built the house No. 73, Great King Street. From there they no doubt entered the good society which was then to be met with in the Scottish capital. Mary, the eldest daughter and fourth child, would at this time be of an age to go to routs and dances with her mother and brothers. She was her brother John's especial favourite. Report says that Mrs. McNeill, who was *petite*, but of beautiful figure, was as fond of dancing as any of her tall sons.

Among the circle of their intimates were Mrs. Wilson, a widow lady of exceptional goodness of heart and mind, and her family of ten, who lived in 53, Queen Street. One of her sons, Robert Sym Wilson, and John McNeill were contemporaries, and became lifelong friends, and one of her daughters, Elizabeth (often called Eliza), soon attracted the attention of her brother's friend. A mutual affection sprang up, which was, however, not looked upon with approval by Mrs. Wilson, and was nipped in the bud. In a very short time, perhaps on the rebound from this disappointment, the young doctor became attached to Innes, fourth daughter of George Robinson, of Gask and Clermiston, Lord Treasurer's Remembrancer, a girl of sixteen. This very youthful couple were married in 1814, the same year as that in which the nineteen-year-old bridegroom took his M.D. degree.

The imprudence of the match naturally met with disapproval in the family, and the young wife was not well received. Two years of trouble and poverty followed, but at length the efforts of Mr. McNeill, the old Laird, to get his son an appointment were successful. It happened in this way. He had gone up to London for the purpose of trying to get John into the East India Company's service, but as he knew none of the Directors his attempts met with no encouragement. Coming in one day to the Tavistock Hotel, Covent Garden, where he was staying, looking very depressed and discouraged, he met a gentleman who was also staying there, and with whom he had frequently conversed, but whose name he did not know. Mr. Forbes of Kingairloch, as his acquaintance proved to be, asked what was the matter, and when he heard asked a few questions about John. He then told Mr. McNeill that he was a Director himself, and would procure an appointment for his son, which he did.

To this fortunate chance young John owed his start in life, and on 4th May, 1816, having borrowed £200 to pay for their outfits, he and his wife sailed from Greenock in the ship *Buckinghamshire*, leaving their baby daughter with her grandparents at Clermiston. The child was called Innes, like her mother, after her grandmother's family, the Innes of Edingight. They had what was considered a very good passage, lasting only four and a half months.

John McNeill's appointment to the East India Company is dated 6th September, 1816. His early impressions are recorded in the following letter to Robert Sym Wilson :

"Bombay,
"18*th September*, 1816.

"My dear Robert,

"You will probably have heard of my arrival here before the receipt of this letter, as I wrote to Mr. Robinson and to my father by a former opportunity. We have not yet heard where we are to be settled, but it is probable we may go to Jannah, about twenty miles off. Duncan,

to whom I have also written, will be able to inform you of some particulars concerning our mode of life. In addition to these, I have to mention that everyone here lives at rack and manger, leaving even their cash entirely in the hands of servants, who always grow rich in consequence. I think I shall be able to live on my pay, though I must borrow a little at the commencement, perhaps about £50, or even a little more. My pay is just £255 per annum, and is paid monthly. If I could be so fortunate as to obtain some Staff situation in a few years, I may make some money; if not, I shall have quite enough to do to live, for at least twelve years to come. We have been extremely fortunate in the commencement in getting into the house of Mr. William Ashburner, of Forbes and Co. He is, without exception, the most gentlemanlike and amiable young man in this place, and his lady stands in the same rank among her own sex.

"The society here is, on the whole, but middling. It will astonish you much to hear that the English and Scottish ladies at Bombay are as full of scandal and ill-nature as the old maids of any country town at home. And we are considered singularly fortunate in having been here *so long* without some old lady having hazarded a conjecture of a censorious nature concerning us.

"Pray mention to Duncan that I hope some exertion will be made to procure recommendations from home—to the Governor more especially, who I have just found is leading the Commander-in-Chief by the nose. The Governor has it in his power to make my fortune if he pleases. When I have seen more of the Service, and know the nature of the different situations, I shall write to my father more particularly."

Bombay society evidently did not compare well with that of Edinburgh.

In the next letter some foreshadowing of a great loss soon to be felt is shown.

"JANNAH,
"*October*, 1816.

"Mrs. McNeill is not in very good health, but, as she moves in a few days to a better climate, I am in hopes that she will speedily recover.

"I have not yet joined in any of the field sports; indeed, they are seldom to be seen here, though the jungles in the Island of Salsette, where I now am, are full of tigers, hogs, etc., etc. Tell James that I shall write to him soon, and that I am busy collecting things for him. Should he be inclined to present them to the Wernerian Society,* I shall expect to be made an honorary member as a matter of course.

"Remember us in the kindest manner to all your family, and tell them that we hope to find them all round the fire when we return in seventeen years. I shall expect to obtain leave to open a bottle of the Collonsay whisky on that occasion.

"I shall expect to find your sisters boring shells or pasting feathers; your mother netting a ruff, or writing in her baker's book; your wife knitting stockings; James, as usual, among beetles in the little room; yourself sitting at the sideboard; and your brother John half-dressed, lending you able assistance—not to mention a few interlopers, such as Willie Young and Cousin Hamilton, who, despising your bread, mustard, and pepper, go seriously to work at the beef."

On 5th November Innes McNeill died, at the age of eighteen, in the house of Mr. Ashburner. Twelve day afterwards, in great grief, the young widower wrote to Robert Wilson:

"You, my dear Robert, who have felt the strength of the tie which binds the heart of a husband to his wife, will form some idea of my situation. My poor dear Innes

* Founded in 1808 by Professor Jameson and other cultivators of the natural sciences.

breathed her last on the 5th of this month, and has left me here amongst strangers, to curse my fate and to lament that ever I was born. My life is now a dreary waste. I can have no home, no comfort, no satisfaction in my exertions, no adequate reward for my labour. I feel no wish for life. I see no consolation. The only thing that could give me any prospect of enjoyment would be my return home—but that is a distant and uncertain prospect. If I can return home soon enough to employ myself in educating my child, I may find in that employment and in her society some recompense for what I have suffered. It is some consolation for me that my dear Innes' latest breath was employed in words of affection for me, and that she suffered little pain and no uneasiness of mind; and it is some further consolation that I have always acted the part of a kind and affectionate husband. During the short period I enjoyed her society I spent many happy, very happy, moments, and I was induced to believe that many more were to come, but now they are cut short for ever."

CHAPTER II

ACTIVE SERVICE

1816—1820

ACTIVE service began almost immediately he was left a widower. From a note made by himself many years later we learn that " In November of that year [1816] Mr. McNeill joined the Field Force at Baroda, and soon thereafter accompanied the detachment under Colonel Elrington which captured Palampore, Deesa, and Koorja. The last-named place, being fiercely defended, was stormed. At the outer edge of the ditch the troops were arrested by a strong abattis of felled trees, with their pointed branches turned outwards, and suffered considerably from the fire of the defenders. Mr. McNeill having succeeded in displacing one of the trees, opened a way for the flank companies of H.M.'s 47th Regiment, and, closely followed by Lieutenant Luttrell, of that regiment, was the first to enter the place.

" On the return of that detachment, he was attached to the headquarters of the Goozerat Division, which, under the command of Major-General Sir William Keir (afterwards Keir-Grant), was about to advance into Central India, to co-operate with the Bengal and Madras Armies against Holkar and the Pindarees. During the campaign Mr. McNeill was employed in various duties—communicating with native chiefs, heads of villages, and others, and sometimes in negotiations with chiefs of tribes who had the power of giving annoyance or of interrupting communications. He was frequently directed

to accompany detachments sent to a distance, in order to facilitate their intercourse with the native authorities, obtain information, procure trusty guides, get supplies, etc. A detachment, including a squadron of H.M.'s 17th Light Dragoons, which Mr. McNeill was directed to accompany, surprised a body of Pindarees at the village of Mundapee, and one of their chiefs took refuge in a small apartment at the top of a high tower, in which there was no stair. No ladder being available, Mr. McNeill, relying on the information that he had obtained that the chief was there, climbed over the roofs of some adjoining houses, and thus obtained access to the entrance of the apartment. The Pindaree stood on his defence, but, after a little parrying and making one desperate but ineffectual cut with his sword, threw it down, and was made prisoner.

"Having been directed to accompany a detachment commanded by Colonel the Hon. Lincoln Stanhope, which was sent to intercept a body of Pindarees, to a distance of about fifty miles, scattered parties of these marauders spread over the intermediate country, and cut off all communication with headquarters. Colonel Stanhope was afraid to move, lest he should thereby disconcert some combination, and requested Mr. McNeill to devise some means of communicating with headquarters. The country, which had been subject to Holkar, was disaffected. The Pindarees, by their cruelties, had excited a panic, and native messengers could not be relied on. At length it was arranged that Mr. McNeill should himself attempt to make his way to headquarters, and being at the time very well mounted, he succeeded in doing so, after having been twice pursued by Pindaree horsemen. He entered Sir W. Keir's tent while Sir John Malcolm was at breakfast with him, and then partook of the first food he had tasted for rather more than forty-eight hours. His horse had, fortunately for him, fared better, for there was abundance of grass in the jungles, in which he had repeatedly found it necessary to conceal himself.

"On the return of the division to Goozerat, he was

directed to accompany to Kandeish, then recently ceded, a detachment commanded by Colonel Jardine, which was employed to expel from the fortified places of the districts of Nunderbar and Sooltanpore the mercenary Arab soldiers, who refused to give them up. This was effected chiefly by negotiations, in which Mr. McNeill was engaged. He was also employed to negotiate with the neighbouring Bheel tribes (from which Outram afterwards raised a corps), and was, it is believed, the first European who penetrated into their country. Two of their Naiks, or chiefs, were induced to come to the camp and make their submission. But having been disabled by fever, Mr. McNeill returned to Bombay, and on his recovery was attached to the headquarters of the expedition which, under command of Sir W. Keir, was sent against the pirate forts in the Southern Concan. The other forts made little resistance, but the hill-fort of Rairee made a stout defence, and it was necessary to besiege it. The outer defences on the level ground, having been breached, were carried without much resistance, and the defenders were pursued towards the upper fort, but they succeeded in getting in, and closing the outer gate. Mr. McNeill was one of six who, entering at an unguarded point, surprised the guard at the outer gate, whose attention was directed to the troops outside, and, having succeeded in opening it, admitted a detachment of H.M.'s 89th Regiment. The inner gate resisted all attempts that could then be made to force it, but the outer gateway was held, and the garrison becoming alarmed and disheartened, the fort was surrendered the same night.

"In the course of the same year Mr. McNeill was attached to the headquarters of an expedition under command of the same General Officer, which was sent against the Rao of Cutch, and which, having taken the fort of Bhoojia, the stronghold of the Rao, by escalade, was rapidly and eminently successful in accomplishing the objects contemplated."

Mr. McNeill, though frequently suffering from malarial

fever during these three years, as numerous letters prove, must have worked with great industry, and not confined his exertions to the limits of his own profession. He has left most elaborate and carefully-compiled tables, giving full particulars of the villages, forts, towns in certain districts, their revenue, troops, past history, and present state, drawn from native Indian sources. His private correspondence was considerable. A few quotations from letters received by him from his friends are of interest, as showing the style of the young Empire-makers of that day, and the methods by which the East India Company extended their borders.

From Colonel Jardine.

"CAMP, SINKURA,
"*26th January*, 1819.

"I envy you your society in Malwan, and wish to the Lord I was with you, for I am sick even unto death of Kandeish, or, rather, of Captain B——, who, notwithstanding he set off to bring his wife, priggeth more violently than ever. I really believe we shall have a rebellion amongst the Bheels, after all. Kooar Massawah has been pestering me with letters for a bundabust; you, of course, know the answer I was obliged to give him. I, however, sent one or two of his first letters to B—— without the smallest comment; but as the gentleman never took the least notice of having received such communications, I have ceased troubling myself on the subject. Kooar, meanwhile, getting no redress, as he says, plundered a large party of Banjawahs at Anundpoor. Ten or twelve days after I am ordered to march a strong party to kill and hang all the enemy in the Company's territory. I thought it was really a serious attack, as his force was stated by B—— to be 400 Arabs, Sindeeans, and Bheels; but it turned out, to my amazement, the old story, and Crosby did neither hear of nor see a single man. He moved on to Kookermoondah,

and Kooar directly sent for leave to come in. . . . The old Ranee, however, will not, I think, fight—she has some good ideas of the difference between an Englishman and a *Goa* Portuguese, at any rate. You must by all means get Sir William to go to Goa. Only Long Rigby and one young Pillulist are now here, but we are threatened with a visitation from Peter P—— and Farquharson in the course of next month. Fever has diminished, but we still continue sickly. . . . The Lord deliver us and preserve you!"

From Colonel Jardine.

"CAMP LASSOOR,
"*2nd March*, 1819.

"I had the pleasure of your letter of the 6th February, by the same post which brought me orders to move in execution of the plan of operations against the Bheels, which my last letter will have informed you was suspended. We accordingly proceeded to Talnur on the 20th, to Goorgam on the 21st, and to this place on the 23rd. I halted one day at Goorgam to procure some information as to the state of the country, and to allow the Madras detachment and my own party to reach their several destined points—Arrawull and Chopra—at the same time that I arrived here. We have been much more fortunate in our proceedings than I had any reason to expect. Mur Khan and Badrhan Khan, two Bheel chiefs, surrendered on the 24th to the Madrassees, and consequently rendered a movement on their Huttee unnecessary. . . . I must say my hopes were far from sanguine at starting, and certainly were not increased, when, after wandering over the hills and through an abominable prickly jungle during the greatest part of the night, morning broke while the place was still far distant. On, however, we went, and about 11 a.m. got within a quarter of a mile of Doulut without having been discovered. I had 150 Sipahees [sepoys] and 20 Irregular Horse. Long, with one-third, and a native officer with another, immediately moved off round each flank, while the rest pushed on direct to the village. As

this was filled with the subjects of our good ally Schindia, I was obliged to order no firing, unless in case of absolute necessity, it being impossible for us to distinguish Bheels from Ryots. In consequence of this, we had fine fun in riding and running fellows down. The Huttees had been deserted a few days before, but, as good luck would have it, Dadoo Naik, Dusrut's uncle, and a famous fellow in the tribe, together with the Dewan, the Chowdree, and half a dozen more Bheels, had come to the village only the day before to receive payment of . . . 300 rupees. . . . We boned every one of these fellows, except one Bheel, who got off with a broken arm, after having shot an arrow into a horseman's side and another into his horse's forehead, which were the only casualties we had in this terrible affair. After having burnt the Huttee on the 26th, we moved off by a different route than that from which we came, carrying off all loot we could gather, which was sold for about 220 rupees, and if I am allowed to get the cash for the bill, which I think is but fair, the whole will give a neat dividend to our men, the whole of whom behaved very well, and did not fire a single shot. Dadoo, sword in hand, made a famous run, but was brought up by a horseman. His wife and family also fell into our hands, and you cannot conceive what an impression this trifling business has made on the natives. . . . In our hill-trips we have nothing with us but a blanket and a cold fowl ; the Sipahees carry a day's rice or two. Look on this long scrawl as no trifling mark of my love, and believe me, etc.,

" J. STUART JARDINE."

From W. Munro, evidently a friend of the family, who had some inkling of the former attachment between John McNeill and Elizabeth, or Eliza, Wilson.

" COMMISSIONER'S CAMP, KUMAON,
" *12th March*, 1819.

" I am now wandering about the woods and wilds of Kumaon in company with the Commissioner of the

Province and Sir R. D. Colquhoun (as worthy a man as ever lived), my commandant. We have been out a fortnight, and do not expect to return to our headquarters at Hawul (not Kraul, as you call it), Bagh, Almorah, before the end of the month. In regard to the face of the country in these here regions, as an observant traveller has remarked, it is chiefly composed of noses and chins; but they are bepimpled, carbuncled, bepitted, and bewhiskered by Nature in all her wildest and most bewitching varieties. This same face is washed by the most clear and limpid waters that ever issued from any rock—rushing and roaring along in grand mountain torrents, and here and there sleeping in the most splendid lakes that ever reflected the heavens, and, moreover, all living with the most delicious fishes. . . . By-the-by, *you* have never told me of Eliza. *Verbum sat.* I hear she is a most lovely and accomplished girl. I should like to know what you think of her, so satisfy my curiosity soon, and believe me very truly to be,

"Yours most affectionately,
"William Munro."

His father writes, giving him family news, and saying:

"I long extremely to hear from you, and know how you enjoy health, and what your prospects are. . . .

"The trees you planted are doing very well, and will soon be very ornamental. . . . Notwithstanding my advanced period of life, I look forward with strong hopes of yet seeing you return with a competency to your native land. . . . I conclude, my dear son, with sentiments of an affectionate father towards a son he dearly loves."

The following letter to his brother-in-law, Andrew Robinson, tells of a new expedition:

"Bombay,
"*26th October*, 1819.

"My dear Andrew,

"I have within the last few days been much delighted by meeting here Mrs. Robert Campbell, who was much

at Mrs. Alick's house, and saw a good deal of my dear little girl. She gives very flattering accounts of her, and very gratifying ones of the kindness she receives.

"I am now on the point of going on board a transport, to accompany an expedition to the Persian Gulf, which has been preparing here for some time, and which will sail on the 1st of November. You must not expect to hear from me before my return, as I may not have an opportunity of sending letters. On my return I know not where I shall be stationed. I have been offered an appointment at Surat, but dread the climate.

"I wish you would have a likeness of my dear little Innes done by Douglas in his best manner. I care not for the price. Let him have it of any size—in any position or employment he may choose. I leave everything to himself, and I shall expect a fine drawing. I shall send some money home to pay for that and some other things on my return from Persia. I should like Elizabeth Wilson's opinion to be taken about the likeness—I mean about the dress of the little girl, and anything else which Douglas may wish to know. When it is done, pray send it out by as early an opportunity as may offer—any agent in London will ship it—and let it be addressed to the care of William Ashburner, Esquire, of Messrs. Forbes and Company, Bombay.

"Remember me kindly and affectionately to all at home, and believe me ever to be, my dear Andrew,

"Your affectionate brother,

"JOHN MCNEILL."

Though John McNeill's service in India was not yet quite at an end, the expedition upon which he now embarked was his introduction to Persia, and to the complicated questions affecting that harassed country.

With his usual thoroughness he studied the cause of the piracy then rampant in the Persian Gulf, and has left, in manuscript, a short paper of "General remarks on the habits and circumstances of the Arabian tribes,

and of the mode of correcting the disorders incidental to the condition of society prevailing amongst them, and deduced as the result of present observation and retrospective enquiry." They are too lengthy to quote here, but recommend a small permanent force should be established at Bushire, or upon an island in the Gulf. He " was attached to the headquarters of the expedition commanded by Sir W. Keir, which was sent against the Arab pirates of the Persian Gulf ; took part in the siege and assault of Ras ul Khyma (where, however, the breach was not defended) ; and subsequently assisted in the negotiations for the surrender of Rouis and of the adjoining hill-fort of Zaigah, as well as in the arrangements for disarming the Arabs who defended those places, which delicate operation he superintended. He also assisted in arranging the terms of the treaties finally concluded with the Arab chiefs of that coast—the first, it is believed, in which the trade in slaves is described as piracy."

The expedition returned to India in 1820. Dr. McNeill's health was so much injured by the hardships he had undergone, and the " Kandiesh " fever which had troubled him for the last two years, that he was recommended to go to Europe. This he did not do, but his letters show an over-anxious state of mind, and his great interest in his child. To Andrew Robinson, his late wife's brother, he wrote, on board the *Cornwall* transport, off Sharga, 3rd February, 1820 :

" . . . I have for six months had no opportunity of sending a letter to England. . . . My allowance will amount in all to not less than £500 per annum. A very small portion of that will be sufficient for my wants, and I shall hope to be able to put a little together for my little girl, in case any accident should befall myself, as well as to set aside a portion annually for the purposes of her education, etc., which I wish to be such as to give her no cause to lament hereafter that I was too poor or too

parsimonious to let her enjoy the advantages which were enjoyed by those around her. . . . I care not about her having fine clothes; I would rather that she had not, and I should be sorry to let her suppose that she had anything great to expect from me, for God knows how long I shall be able to hold together, but so long as I do I wish to give her every opportunity of acquiring what is useful and ornamental in education. . . . If she has any liking for music I am very desirous that her talent for that should be cultivated, more particularly if she has a good voice."

In a letter begun, but apparently never finished or sent, to his sister Mary he is eager for news of home, and especially of Edinburgh, saying:

"CAMP SEIROOR,
"10*th July*, 1820.

"MY DEAR MARY,

"You are now, I presume, residing in Edinburgh, where everything that occurs is interesting to me from early associations. The very mention of the name of a person, or even of a street, has often the power to call up in my mind ideas and remembrances more pleasing than any that are suggested or recalled by the most striking occurrences in this country. The happiest period of my life was probably that which I spent in Edinburgh, and I look forward to my return to it as to the period when I shall be happy again. Many of the occurrences of those years which I spent there are such as I am afraid now to dwell on as drawing a contrast painfully strong between my situation at that time and at present; many of the feelings then aroused, tho' they may have slept for a time, are still in existence, and some which it may have been my duty and my desire to suppress have outlived all my efforts to subdue them. But let them dwell alone with me, and cause no pain to any other than myself. . . .

"You must give me a minute and detailed account of everyone in 53, Queen Street, for all and each of whom I retain feelings of regard and attachment as strong as

ever. To Mrs. Wilson I return my most grateful thanks for her continued kindness in writing to me. I propose writing a very long and troublesome letter to her in a few days."

This, from his mother, must have been cheering :

"COLLONSAY,
"*13th January*, 1820.

"A good New Year to you, and many of them. So many of this family, my dearest John, have become your correspondents that I have hardly anything to say. Their letters from their time of life may be gay, and convey to you some amusement, whilst mine can scarcely reward the trouble of perusal, but of one important [thing ?] I am convinced, which is, that from no pen will you ever receive expressions more fraught with sincerity than from mine, and that no heart can more truly participate of all the changes you undergo than mine. I was most sincerely grieved to learn from your Uncle Malcolm that your health had been so bad, and had it continued so most certainly you must have tried what home could have done for [you], and with heartfelt delight, my dearest son, would I have watched your bed, and tended you as my only hope, but, thank Heaven, a brighter prospect opens to you—health and independence ; the one cannot be properly enjoyed without the aid of the other, and if the Almighty grants you the former, I trust the latter will soon follow so rapidly that before my last black hair becomes white I may see you enjoying your friends as you was wont to do, amusing the aged and delighting the young. In six years I hope to see you return as full of health and sport, as handsome, as gay, and as rich as will enable you to live like a gentleman, for more is quite unnecessary. You will by that time be only one year older than Sandy, who is the first dandy in Princes Street. I suppose your sisters would write you of all the news of town and country. The Argyleshire meeting, the Glasgow Radicals, of Duncan doing duty at Edinburgh Castle along with the rest of the

advocates—they have not, I am sure, left me one word to say, only what they could not tell you, which is that your father had a letter last night from Walter Frederick of Shawfield,* acquainting him that he was to be married directly to the Lady Eleanor Charteris, eldest daughter of the Earl of Wemyss and March. She will make us a most delightful neighbour; she is amiable, and very sensible. Jean Rind lives with your grandmother, and pays her great attention; they were both here at Christmas, and returned home to-day. She is wonderfully well, possesses her mental powers quite entire, and has her appetite better than I ever remember. Have you seen that ape N. M——d? Mrs. Kean, her sister-in-law, carried her to Bombay market. Do you think she can have any chance there? Louisa has turned the most malicious old maid in existence. Duncan is to forward the newspapers and an almanac to you. We hear frequently of your sweet little girl, who by all accounts is the most enchanting little darling. Accept my love and blessing, and believe me to be,

"Your truly affectionate mother,
"HESTER MCNEILL."

A good many letters of this year from Anglo-Indian friends have been preserved. All show a kindly affection for, and admiration of, the young widower, and, incidentally, his kindness of heart is brought out. Mr. Ashburner writes often; Colonel Jardine; Major Colebrooke, in whom was a "rare assemblage of good"; and Captain M. Campbell, who nicknames Dr. McNeill "Hadje Ibrahim," in that he was of "most humane, beneficent, and noble nature." They tell the news and gossip of their stations, of the flirtations or the more serious scandals, of new arrivals, departures, and, too frequently, of the deaths of acquaintances and friends. One duel is mentioned, and many letters are about military expeditions. The friend who is evidently more to John McNeill than

* Mr. Campbell, of Shawfield and Islay.

HESTER McNEILL.

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others is one David Wilson. They had both been students in old St. Andrews College, and though David was no connection of the Wilson family already spoken of, he must have known them. His letters are long and frequent ; in them he pours out his heart, discussing religious faith and kindred subjects with his friend.

Toward the end of 1820 Assistant-Surgeon McNeill was appointed to succeed Dr. Richard Sharp at Teheran, being thus attached to H.M. Mission in Persia. He says himself " of the fifty months he was in India, he spent above forty in the field, and of the remaining ten the greater part on a sick bed." He now bade a final adieu to Hindustan.

CHAPTER III

INTRODUCTION TO PERSIA

1820—1822

BEFORE entering on the more personal experiences of John McNeill in Persia, it will be well to recall the state of that country, and to glance at the negotiations entered into between its rulers and those of European nations.

In A.D. 1290 Argun-Khan, a Christian King of the Mogul Dynasty, sent Embassies to the Pope, to France, and to England. Edward I. sent an Envoy (Geoffry de Langley) in return, with gerfalcons as a present to the Eastern potentate. In 1561 Queen Elizabeth sent a letter to Shah Tahmasp, but it led to no permanent result. James I., Charles I., and Charles II. all conducted negotiations regarding trade facilities with the rulers of Persia, and in 1622 the East India Company assisted Abbas the Great to expel the Portuguese from the Persian Gulf. Unfortunately, the wise foreign policy of the Stuart Kings was discontinued, and it was not till 1800 that diplomatic relations were reopened.

In the interval several gallant merchant adventurers attempted to establish commercial intercourse between England and Persia, notably one John Elton in 1738, who built ships, and obtained a decree from Razha Kuly, the Shah's son, to trade on the Caspian Sea. The jealousy of the Russian Government put a stop to this, and, having no representative at a Persian Court to appeal to, the British traders were obliged to sell their vessels to Russian merchants at great loss in 1746. The following year

Nadir Shah, of the Zand Dynasty, who then reigned, was assassinated ; his mighty empire fell to pieces, and anarchy prevailed over Persia. A period of desperate internecine warfare ensued, of treachery and of inhuman cruelty between contending factions.*

This state of affairs gave Russia an opportunity to increase her territory. In 1752, 1768, 1781, and 1785 she pressed with persevering activity her intercourse with the Persian dependencies nearest to her own border, and in 1796 she invaded Georgia. The whole western shore of the Caspian Sea and the line of the River Aras (Araxes) fell into her hands.

By this time Persia had again become a consolidated kingdom under the eunuch King Agha Mohamed, the first of the Kajar Dynasty, and the Russians were not allowed to remain in undisputed possession. This cruel King died by the hands of two of his servants in 1797, but the war dragged on in an uncertain way after the succession of his nephew, Fetteh Ali Shah, till, in 1814, it was terminated by the Treaty of Goolistan, which was not favourable to Persia.

In November, 1800, Captain (afterwards Sir John) Malcolm was sent by the Government of India to treat with Fetteh Ali Shah. He concluded a treaty, and, leaving an excellent impression, returned to India in February, 1801. In March, 1807, Napoleon sent an embassy under General Gardanne, who was profuse in his offers to Fetteh Ali of assistance against the Russians, and who brought with him several French officers to drill the Persian soldiers. At first he was very successful : an offensive and defensive treaty was signed, and the influence of France was so much in the ascendant that a second Mission from India, again under Malcolm, was not permitted to advance beyond Bushire. The tables were soon after turned. Sir Harford Jones, who had resided at Basrah from 1784 to 1794, and had visited Shiraz, the

* Markham's and Watson's Histories of Persia, and *Blackwood's Magazine*, vol. xxi.

capital of Persia, when the Zand Princes reigned, was appointed by the British home Government on a Mission to the Shah in 1807, with Mr. Morier as private secretary, and Mr. (afterwards Sir) Henry Willock as assistant. The French Envoy was dismissed from Teheran. Sir Harford Jones proved entirely successful, and a preliminary treaty was signed 12th March, 1809. Most unfortunately, this Mission was resented by the Governor-General of India, who actually sent a rival Envoy (again Sir John Malcolm) in 1808. Jones was succeeded by Sir Gore Ouseley in 1811, and on 14th March, 1812, a definitive treaty was signed by Ouseley on behalf of King George III. of England, and Mirza Shafy, Prime Minister, on behalf of the Shah.

Sir John Malcolm was accompanied by a number of officers, who remained in Persia, and some of whom became friends of Dr. McNeill. Several travelled through the various provinces, collecting information—Captain Christie performed a journey by Sistan to Herat; Lieutenant Pottinger explored Baluchistan; Monteith, an Engineer officer, and Kinneir (afterwards Sir John Kinneir Macdonald) went to Basrah. There were also Mr. (afterwards Sir) Henry Ellis; Briggs, the translator of "Ferishta"; the heroic Lindsay, of gigantic stature, and Captains Grant and Fotheringham; but of these last one was shot, and the other, when offered life by his robber captor, on condition that he would adopt the Mohammedan religion, bravely met a martyr's fate. This happened some years before John McNeill went to Persia. Sir John Malcolm returned to India for the third time in July, 1810, leaving behind several officers who elected to remain in the Persian Army. Sir Gore Ouseley returned to England early in 1814, but the treaty he had signed was discovered to be informal, so it was necessary to frame another. Mr. Morier remained in charge at Teheran, and he and Mr. Ellis were deputed to negotiate. Finally a treaty was concluded by them with the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State, and the Kaim Makam

(*i.e.*, substitute or Viceroy) on 25th November, 1814, known as the Treaty of Teheran. By it Great Britain was bound to pay to Persia a subsidy of 200,000 tomans annually; to maintain troops in the event of her being attacked by any Power at war with England; and should she be attacked by any nation at peace with England, we engaged to use our mediation towards an amicable adjustment of their differences, but, should it fail, to pay a subsidy as above mentioned.

Persia, on her side, engaged to obstruct any Power seeking to pass through her country for the purpose of invading India. The treaty was therefore exclusively defensive, as, indeed, it is declared to be in the document itself.

Henry Willock succeeded Mr. Morier as Chargé d'Affaires, a position which he held till January, 1827, and it was in the humble capacity of Assistant-Surgeon to his Mission that John McNeill arrived in Persia in January, 1821.

His journey from Bombay was long and slow, but for part of the way he was able to join Sir William Keir, Colonel Douglas, Major Colbrooke, and other officers from Bengal who were travelling to Europe via Persia. Letters from Major Henry Willock congratulating him on his arrival in Persia, and telling him that the Minister of Shiraz and the Governor of Izapahan had been written to to help him on his route, met him, and also one from Dr. Sharp, whom he was to succeed, giving various directions about the supply of medicine, and ending: "If advice from me is not taken amiss, I should recommend caution with regard to your fair neighbour; it is the rock on which I split!" Thus welcomed and warned, he reached Teheran in April, and we have his first impressions in the following letter to Andrew Robinson:

"Teheran,
"*17th April*, 1821.

"I wrote you from Bombay to mention my having been appointed to this station, and now have to tell you

something about it. You are probably aware that it is the present capital of Persia, and that the relations of Persia to India are so intimate that it is advisable to have a considerable British establishment at all times in the country.

" There is here at present a Chargé d'Affaires, to whom I am attached in the capacity of surgeon, and am, moreover, expected to render assistance in the way of my profession to such persons in the King's household as may require medical advice.

" I shall attempt in some of my future letters to give you some account of the country in which I have taken up my abode. It is interesting in many ways, but chiefly on account of its connection with Greece and Rome, and its having retained, in spite of a violent change in religion and a series of conquests, the same type which had stamped it in the days of Herodotus. The Persians still consider themselves 'the most excellent of mankind,' and seem to think that, on the strength of the character which they assume, they may be guilty of every vice and infamy which a mind accomplished in deceit and villainy of every kind can devise, to serve even a momentary object, the most trivial and unimportant.

" The Indians, with much weakness and much vice, are far more moral and more trustworthy than the Persians. In India falsehood and villainy of every kind fixes on the perpetrator some degree of evil opinion and disgrace, but in Persia it does not. An accomplished liar gets full credit for the ingenuity which he may display, and the admiration of his talents is not in any degree diminished by the foulness of the offence or the mischief to which it may have led.

" Yet these men are in society so plausible, so polite, so witty and amusing, and have the power of putting on an air of candour and singleness so imposing, that for an hour's conversation, or even for a day, you cannot find a more pleasing companion than a Persian noble. The Ambassador who lately visited England was there courted

and sought after with an avidity truly astonishing, and received attentions which the fulness of gratitude could never repay. Yet he slanders Britain as freely as if he had been ill-treated. He lets the Persians understand that the attentions paid to him were shown from our fear of the Persians ! ! ! He pretends to have been favoured in an extraordinary degree by the ladies of England. . . . Yet to the Englishman here he holds another language, and professes to have of our country the opinion which it deserved. But I am getting angry while I write, and must leave off. When you write, tell me more about Innes ; tell me little anecdotes of her, what she says, whether she ever asks for me, and what idea she has of the feeling which may be due from her to me, or whether she has any. . . ."

There is very little record of his first year in Persia, but we are able to gather some idea of his interests from various letters. One from George Lichfield, who is at Shiraz buying horses for remounts, speaks of an arrangement made by which Dr. McNeill was to buy horses for India at a 10 per cent. commission, adding : " I do not know how I could be more assisted than by the aid which you are capable of affording me." Another writes from Jaunpaun, asking him to get information about the Persian Gipsies, " to assist in my introductory Essay and Vocabulary for the Asiatic Society." A third asks him to send " a few of your best melon-seeds, both of Tehran and Ispahan." His brother Malcolm, a cadet in the East India Company's service, writes : " The 8th L.C. marched into Arcot the week we left, and from them I got accounts of you. They all put you down as the most temperate of men in your living."

John McNeill was fond of children, and while in India little Eliza and Charlie Ashburner had found " Mneal," as they called him, a delightful playfellow. In all his plans the first thought was ever to make enough money to go home and live with his child. In a letter dated

3rd October, 1821, to Mrs. Wilson, whom he consulted about a school for little Innes, he mentions : " My income is now considerable, my expenses not great, so that, after paying Innes's expenses, I shall be saving £500 a year." When he wrote this he had no idea that within six months he would be on his way home.

Major Willock was not long in discovering that the Assistant-Surgeon had talents which fitted him for political and diplomatic work, and he made him temporary Assistant Chargé d'Affaires as well. In April of the following year Major Willock and Fetteh Ali Shah had a serious disagreement, and the former thought it best that he should visit England. He directed Dr. McNeill to accompany him, as he " was acquainted with every circumstance of the late occurrences, and will be able to communicate useful information on the subject." He also availed himself of the opportunity " to offer my best thanks for the valuable assistance you have always so readily afforded."

The intense pleasure this command must have given, the long journey home, the route they took, and the joyous meeting with his little girl, are all left to the imagination ; there is not a scrap among his papers telling us a word. The scene shifts suddenly to the Island of Colonsay, where he is reunited with parents and child in August, 1822, and is waiting further instructions from his Chief. There are little glimpses of the Colonsay life in various letters to Robert Sym Wilson :

" Innes is as happy as she is capable of being, and as much made of by everyone as is good for her. Mary is her great favourite, and next her Grandpapa. . . . I went over to the coast of Jura, opposite to us, shot seven brace, and returned in good time in the evening.

" In consequence of the letter which I have to-day received from Willock, and of the delay in completing the ultimate arrangement of our business, which will, I conclude, follow on the melancholy death of the Marquis of

Londonderry, I shall remain here for a week longer. . . . I do not know what time we may be detained by this event, but I have little hesitation in setting it down at a month at least."

John and little Innes left Colonsay on 17th September, and next day his father wrote :

" I have not, nor do I expect to enjoy, such pleasure and happiness as I did from your society until I meet you again, if ever I have that comfort in this world."

CHAPTER IV

ELIZABETH WILSON

HITHERTO these memoirs have been chiefly concerned with John McNeill, but now Elizabeth, or Eliza, Wilson (so soon to be his wife) must receive more attention. Of her childhood little is known, except that she was the fifth daughter and ninth child of John Wilson, a wealthy merchant and a manufacturer of gauze in Paisley. Mr. Wilson also founded the bank there, and was altogether a leading citizen. His father and grandfather had been merchants before him in the same town. Her mother was Margaret Sym, daughter of a well-to-do merchant, Andrew Sym, who had also tobacco plantations in Virginia. John Wilson died in 1797, when Elizabeth was five years old, and his widow and family moved into Edinburgh, and settled in 53, Queen Street. Though not of aristocratic origin, the Wilsons appear to have taken a very good position in the society of the day, to have had many friends, and spent a gay and happy time, keeping a hospitable open house. John, the eldest son, afterwards became famous under the pseudonym of Christopher North; Robert Sym, the friend of John McNeill, was a Writer to the Signet and banker; James, the youngest, was a naturalist of some repute, wrote several books, and was editor of the Natural History section of the "Encyclopædia Britannica." The first written record beyond the mere mention in letters of Elizabeth is part of a diary kept by her when she and her elder sister Jane spent a winter in Italy with their brother

James for the sake of his health. The diary begins in August, 1820, and opens: "Left Edinburgh with the prospect of being absent for at least a year." They went by sea from Liverpool to Genoa, and spent some time there and at Pisa and Florence. The three young people had a very pleasant time, in spite of the anxiety James's health constantly gave them. At every stop they seem to have had friends to meet them, and to make new ones. In a "list of correspondents" Miss McNeill of Colonsay, Portaskaig, John McNeill's sister, is mentioned, so, no doubt, she received some sprightly, delightful letters, written by the same hand as the diary, which proceeds:

"Went to see Lady Charlotte Bury, looking extremely well, with a lilac crape turban and kid boots of the same colour." "Met the Miss Campbells, and joined them; think Emma will be beautiful." "Had a call from Dr. Peebles, who says he never gets a laugh but when he comes here." "Passed a delightful day singing, harping, and waltzing." "Danced with Marchesas and Contis innumerable." "Thought the dancing very bad, kicking out their feet and jumping high without any grace." "Had some interesting conversation with Lady C. Bury on the power of love and the beauty of Italy—two subjects she is well qualified to talk upon." "Went to the Domo to hear an Italian sermon. Too declamatory, and, as far as I could judge, no great shakes." "Long letter from my mother, containing much news—a rich treat to hear of all one loves—I know no one who is so satisfactory a correspondent as my mother; such a speaking style: it is quite delightful—God bless her!" This volume of the journal ends abruptly: "Mending black cotton stockings with white worsted, as such a thing as black cotton is not to be obtained either at Florence or Pisa." The succeeding volumes are missing, so we do not know if they remained absent over a year. Probably they did, and had not returned home when Major H. Willock, Dr. John McNeill, and Mirza Sauleh, the Persian Secretary, had reached this country.

When John McNeill and little Innes arrived in Edinburgh from Colonsay, Elizabeth was at home, and the week he had intended to spend there became a month, and before the end of it she had promised to share his life, and had faced the prospect of that life being for many years, probably, in far-off Persia. In October of this year (1822) John was in London trying to settle matters regarding his return to Persia, and wrote to Robert Sym Wilson :

"Willock has had a very gratifying letter from Mr. Elphinstone, the Governor of Bombay, commending him highly for the spirit, temper, and dignity of his conduct on the late occasion in Persia, which has put him on very high ground with the Government here, and is likely to be of essential benefit to us in the arrangements to be made with the Persian Government on our return, the more so as Mr. Elphinstone had reinforced the garrison at Kishm, an island in the Gulf of Persia, with the view of aweing the Government of that country in the event of their contemplating any further annoyance to us. Nothing can be more pleasing to me than so ample a testimony, from so high an authority, of the propriety of everything done at so trying a time, and nothing is more likely to make the British Government place the Mission on the most respectable footing and give it that support which in Eastern countries is so requisite to its respectability as well as to its utility."

Henry Willock writes :

"*30th October*, 1822.

"I thought you promised not to marry till February. I ought to have found some excuse to keep you in London. I know you are not to be trusted. I hope Miss Wilson is mild and amiable. I heard Lady —— speak to Sir J. M—— to-day in a manner which quite put all thoughts of marriage out of my head. How shocking is the scolding wife ! I hope to be present at your marriage."

One of Elizabeth's Letters to her Future Husband.

"Queen Street,
"My dearest John, "*2nd December*, 1822.

"Your letter, which I received between sermons yesterday, I answer with particular pleasure, as from its purport I have some hope that *this* may be my *last*. To be separated for nothing is really hard, although that *rogue* Willock seems to think it a trifle! Your father and mother are still here, and I suspect will be for some time. . . . I ventured to express to your father our wish to have Mary for a few weeks, but he looked very grave and shook his head. Poor soul, I fear we are not to get her. . . . Menzies is at the Meadow House to-day. There seems to be some doubt now whether he will be made deputy. Lockhart and Peter Robertson are both talked of; the former, backed by Sir Walter Scott, is no ordinary rival. Poor creature, I shall feel sorry if he loses *everything*. My Aunt Sym has been confined with an inflammation in her eyes ever since we left her. She says she has suffered too much at parting already to undergo it again, and will not *come in*. She, moreover, adds that although she *must confess* that you are a very pleasing person, she must always bear you a *great grudge!* I must try to make up to you for all the ill-will you are getting. My mother bids me be sure to tell you *not* to hurry down, and mentioned a great many good reasons, all of which I am sure you know; besides, I have forgotten them, for which I crave your pardon. Your anger, at all events, I hope will have evaporated before we meet, as I shall certainly *die* of the first indignant glance you bestow upon me.

"With kindest regards from all, I add only that I ever am yours with sincere affection,

"Elizabeth Wilson."

To Robert Sym Wilson.

"24, South Audley Street,
"London,
"*9th December*, 1822.

"My dear Robert,

"I am not quite certain that I shall get down to Edinburgh in time enough to have all matters in your department arranged before the New Year commences, as I am not aware what time such arrangements occupy, but there can be no harm in your preparing everything as soon as may be convenient.

"I have written to Duncan* fully on the subject, and have requested that you would settle everything between you. I have mentioned my wish that the liferent of Elizabeth's money should be settled on herself, and the capital on our children, should there be any, after her; that the pensions from the College of Surgeons and from the Military Fund of Bombay are beyond my control, and would accrue to my widow as a matter of course, the former certainly and the latter subject to the regulations of the Institution; that I wish Elizabeth's money to be placed in the charge of trustees, and that I wish himself and you to be appointed. All this I believe I stated to you at Edinburgh.

"I shall leave this place on Thursday if I can, and if I cannot, I shall at all events be in Edinburgh before Christmas Day. . . . There is a mission going out to South America immediately, to acknowledge (it is supposed) the independence of what was the Spanish Colony in that country, and the acknowledgment of the mother country is expected to follow. A negotiation is also on foot for giving up Gibraltar to Spain, and getting Cuba and Havana in exchange. On the whole, British funds are expected to rise considerably.

"Yours affectionately,
"John McNeill."

The marriage took place on New Year's Day, 1823. Meanwhile, in London, Henry Willock and Mirza

* His brother, afterwards Lord Colonsay.

Ant. Renno Co

Elizabeth Wilson
1822.

Sauleh had been interviewing Foreign Office officials. The Right Hon. George Canning, Minister for Foreign Affairs,* had given Major Willock's representations a most "patient and attentive hearing," but nothing had been decided as to the future composition of the Persian Mission, and the question whether the British Government or that of India was to be directly represented by the Envoy was again under discussion. On 24th January, 1824, Henry Willock writes :

"I yesterday waited on the new Under Secretary of State. . . . I told him the Directors were much divided in opinion as to the propriety of their undertaking charge of the relations with Persia ; some were ambitious of the honour of treating with independent sovereigns, others took a mercantile view of the question, and weighed the loss and profit with dread at the certain heavy expense and doubtful advantage. Mr. Reid made a sensible observation : that the Company would not conduct the charge with efficiency, as she would only have one view of the picture, drawn by her agent at the Court, and to be acquainted with the relation of Persia in all its bearings, she ought to have access to the correspondence of the British Ambassadors at St. Petersburg and Constantinople. 'Very true,' replied Lord F. Conyngham, 'but the objection may easily be obviated by their Minister being placed in correspondence with those Ambassadors. . . .' Since writing the above, I have been introduced by Morier to Lord Teignmouth, who has promised to speak to Mr. Grant, the Director. He said nothing could be stronger than Mr. Canning's testimony. . . ."

In March Mr. McNeill had to go up to London about Persian and other business. He remained away until May. Mrs. McNeill stayed with her mother in 53, Queen Street, and the following are extracts from her letters to her husband during these months :

* He succeeded Lord Londonderry, after the latter's tragic death, 12th August, 1822, in Lord Liverpool's Government.

"*18th March.*

"I write to-day, my dearest, at Robert's instigation, who thinks that Blytheswood is a very likely person to be of some use to you, both in your own affairs and those of the Laird, and that you ought to call upon him forthwith, and introduce your father to him. He may be heard of either at the House of Commons, or, which may probably be the speedier method, at his agents', Spottiswoode and Robertson, Sackville Street. You know what a pleasant person he is, and he has always shown a disposition to favour our family whenever it was in his power.

"I sent the Persian dye to Lady Frances t'other day, but wish you would mention the particulars of how to use it when next you write, as I suspect her ladyship is ignorant of them. I try to put a good face on my widowhood, but in point of fact miss my dearie even more than I expected to have done."

"*21st March.*

"Your welcome letter, which I received this morning, has made me both glad and sorry. The good, however, does most certainly predominate, and even should we be forced to go by sea, I think it probable that I may not be nearly so sick in a large ship as I was in a merchant vessel. I feel for Willock. Still to be kept in doubt is really very hard. I am grateful to him for keeping your interests in view in the midst of the anxieties he must be in of his own. On the 2nd we are to have a dinner-party for new married folks—Johnnie Campbell and his wife, Willie Young and his wife, and Dr. Keith and *his wife*—poor things! My *religious principles* defend me from the crime of envying any of them.

"'The Trials' are going off like smoke. The second edition is printing, and the third of 'Lights and Shadows.'"*

* "The Trials of Miss Lindsay" and "Lights and Shadows" are stories published by Professor Wilson, Elizabeth's brother.

"*23rd March.*

"Your letter of this morning made me very happy. Whether we go or stay, I can never be otherwise while you are well, and while I possess the treasure of your heart. Your description of the Mowers* is most excellent, most characteristic! It was quite unnecessary to have added their names. I expect real pleasure from their society when we are in London, if they remain, which I doubt, as he is the most unsettled genius I ever knew—every genius is so, except *mine*, and I doubt if he will recognize himself under such an *appellation!*"

"*22nd April.*

"I am glad you honoured the King by a visit. I am sure the *ermined* nobles must have made a poor appearance beside you. What kind of dress did you wear? All those I saw here were frightful. I am glad David Wilson is still in London, as he will help to keep up your spirits. Our separation is indeed a weary one. I trust it will not last very much longer. Our mother, dearest, is greatly pleased with what I read her of your letter to-day. I think she grudges your absence almost as much as I do. She says *I* ought not to mind, but that it is very hard that she is to see so little of you."

Captain George Willock, brother of Major Henry Willock, had been left in Persia to look after British interests, and in some degree to represent the Chargé d'Affaires. As it seemed probable that some time might still elapse before definite arrangements about the Persian Mission were made, and George Willock was without medical assistance, which was very essential to Europeans at Teheran, Major Willock, on 23rd April, 1823, requested Dr. McNeill to apply to be allowed to return to his duties, adding: "As you have come home entirely on my requisition and on public duty, I have no doubt the East India Company will defray the expense of your returning journey, as a compliance with my

* Dr. and Mrs. Mower, lifelong friends. He wrote "The White Cottage" and other tales.

directions has subjected you to a very heavy expense, which you would not have incurred had you remained at your post." In this matter, however, they were disappointed. The Directors referred McNeill to the Secretary of State, who would give nothing, and as McNeill was a servant of the East India Company, referred him back to the India House. In the end, Dr. McNeill had to pay his own way, and to do this borrowed £600, as he did not think it advisable to set out with a smaller sum.

Husband and wife were reunited in May, and they left for London at the end of the month, spending two days on the way at Elleray, on Lake Windermere, the beautiful home of Professor Wilson (Christopher North), Elizabeth's brother, and, taking a "comfortable snooze every night in some one of the towns on our route," they arrived at 27, George Street, Portman Square, from where Elizabeth writes to her mother: "Our stay at Elleray was most pleasant. . . . If any earthly abode can be called Paradise, that may. I have never seen any place in any country to compare with what it is now."

"*7th June.*

"We expect to sail for St. Petersburg the beginning of next week, and have got almost everything in readiness now. Lady Ellinor Campbell waited on me, and we dined there yesterday. Adelaide and Julia are staying with her. We had an elegant dinner at half-past seven, and passed a pleasant evening. To-morrow we are to dine with Colonel MacNeill, Barrow (Barra), and on Wednesday go to see Lady Charlotte, on Thursday to the Ruckers, and return Friday morning to pack up finally. John will remit you something for Innes before we depart, and *the great debt* must be paid off as fast as we can. The Directors have behaved very shabbily.

"Sir John Malcolm called for me yesterday, and I was much pleased with him. He does not seem to think that there is much chance that he will go to Persia."

From John McNeill to R. S. Wilson.

"*9th June*, 1823.

"It has been determined between the East India Company and the King's Government to send out Willock in the meantime, and after a few months to send a Mission from India on a scale somewhat higher, to commence the new arrangement, which places the charge of the relations with Persia in the hands of the East India Company. Whoever may be sent, it is understood that the persons now employed in Persia, and myself among the number, will remain *in statu quo*.

"The Laird roused me out of bed this morning, to my no small astonishment. He came through by the mail, and arrived as fresh as a two-year-old. We sail on Saturday, and are not sorry for the delay which has occurred here; we should have been uncomfortably hurried.

"Yours very affectionately,

"John McNeill."

CHAPTER V

RETURN TO PERSIA

1823, 1824

From John McNeill's Diary.

"*Monday, 30th June,* 1823.—We left George Street, Portman Square, before eight o'clock a.m., in company with my father and Duncan, having sent Schmidt and Mrs. Robertson before us with the baggage. On our arrival at Tower Stairs saw the Gravesend steamboat setting off, but Schmidt not having arrived with the things, we were too late for her. On his arrival we hired a four-oared boat for £2 to take ourselves and baggage to Gravesend. My father and Duncan took a boat to Greenwich with the intention of breakfasting at Blackheath; we hoped to have gone down to Greenwich in company, but our boat pulled off faster, and we parted without taking leave. It was perhaps better so. We got down pleasantly enough to Gravesend about 2 p.m., passing the *Raby Castle* in the river, and putting on board our heavy portmanteaus, etc.

"'*Raby Castle,*' *Friday, 4th July.*—About 4 a.m., we got under way; wind S.W., gentle breeze; at noon abreast of Harwich, many vessels all round us steering the same course, but most of them gaining upon us. In the evening were abreast of Southwold, where this day twelve months, at the same hour, I had landed in England from the Hamburg packet. During yesterday and to-day Elizabeth has suffered much from sea-sickness.

"*Sunday, 6th.*—This morning the weather is moderate, but the sea is troubled, and as the wind continues right aft the vessel rolls heavily.

"*Monday, 7th.*—About noon we made the coast of Jutland. . . .

"*Tuesday.*—Passed the Trindell Rock about 4 a.m. in seven fathoms, wind west ; at five the wind became light, and hung more to the southward. We stretched over to the Swedish coast, and fetched near Warburg Castle. We tacked, and got sight of the Annholt Lighthouse, bearing S.S.W.

"*Wednesday.*—The coast on the Danish side—Zealand—is very beautiful. We came to anchor about 2 p.m. ; the roads were crowded with shipping coming in, going out, and at anchor, and a number of little boats were plying to and fro. We proceeded to an inn kept by Madame Oder, to which we had been recommended. The house was large and commodious, and the apartments good. The town of Elsinore is of small extent, but tolerably neat and clean. The Danish Government levies a duty on the cargoes of all vessels, excepting Swedish, which pass up and down the Baltic. This obliges them all to stop at Elsinore, where the duty is exacted, and the arrangement of this matter, the procuring of papers, testifying that these duties have been paid (without which you cannot land a cargo of any kind in any port in the Baltic), the supply of fresh provisions, and every other description of expenditure or arrangement, is managed by the broker, who settles his account with the Captain previous to his departure. This seems to be a safe and productive business if we may judge by the number of applications for your business which are made on shore, and the success of those who have been fortunate enough to get extensive employment. There are some merchants here, but the trade of the place is inconsiderable. The supply of shipping with provisions of all kinds and spirits (chiefly gin) seems to be the support of the place.

"*Elsinore, Thursday.*—We took a carriage and drove to see two royal palaces in the country. On the whole the occasional peeps of the sea through the wood, the shipping, the rich variety of foliage by which we were surrounded, the small lakes scattered here and there, the palaces, the white cottages occurring at short intervals, the mixture of wild patches of heath with fields of corn, the variety of figures on the road, the good humour which shone in every countenance, the courtier-like politeness with which they saluted one another as they passed, and the satisfaction we ourselves enjoyed in finding ourselves on shore, gave to our ride a liveliness and an interest which we cannot fail to remember with pleasure."

The diary breaks off here, and recommences without date :

"In the morning anchored near the Guardship, about four miles below Kronstadt. An officer from the Guardship came on board, examined the Captain's papers and our passports, and said he would return to clear the vessel after dinner, but could not do it now, as the Emperor was hourly expected to visit the Fleet. The officer's interpreter, a fellow who spoke a little English, begged some porter, and promised, for a dozen bottles, to clear us first. The Captain gave him two, which he carried off in triumph. In the afternoon another officer came on board to clear the ship. He was tipsy, as was his interpreter and everyone with him. They begged for porter and gin, and carried off a few bottles, leaving a pilot on board. All vessels coming to Kronstadt must clear at the Guardship before proceeding further. On coming abreast of any cruiser, or ship-of-war, or fort, they must lower topgallant sails, and royals if set, and they must, on leaving the Guardship, take on board some man as a pilot from the boat which clears her. This man generally knows nothing at all of steering a ship or managing her, but he knows where the channel is, and will make himself useful for a glass of gin. About 6 p.m.

we came to near the Mole at Kronstadt, and warped up. We were ordered to warp up into the mole to clear the way for the Emperor, who was expected next morning. It was 1 a.m. before we got to our place in the mole. Off Kronstadt were lying a good many Russian frigates fit for sea—fine-looking vessels, well rigged and clean. The mole, where merchant-vessels lie, was a forest of masts, and beyond it, in the men-of-war's mole, were many ships of the line and frigates lying in ordinary. The whole was a fine sight indicative of active trade and power.

"The mole is an extensive fortification, and the whole place is defended by fortifications, which must have been erected at great expense in the water. The number of pieces of ordnance now mounted at Kronstadt is immense: I should be inclined to think not less than 500 to 800 12- to 24-pounder long guns, 96-pounder carronades, mortars, etc. It would be quite impossible, I should imagine, for any fleet to take it unless by accident. In the morning, about six o'clock, I set out with my passports to the Master of the Port; from hence they are sent to the Harbour-Master, from him to the Custom-House, from thence to the Admiral. You are called before the Admiral, who puts a few questions of form, such as where you came from, what countryman you are, etc., etc. The Admiral's translator, Mr. Cramp, gets all about the renewal of your passports arranged, for which you give him ten roubles. The passport which you bring—whatever it may be—is taken from you, and the Admiral grants one to any part of Russia you may wish to go to. I was under the necessity of going to the Harbour-Master twice, to the Custom-House three or four times, and to the Admiral's interpreter twice before I got my business arranged, and even then it occupied me till 2 p.m., eight hours' unremitted labour.

"We stopped at an inn well kept by a man of the name of Stewart—a Scotchman, of course."

The diary again breaks off abruptly, but the much-signed passport shows that they were in St. Petersburg

14th July, and a few pages of notes by Elizabeth McNeill give their arrival in Persia and subsequent events.

"We arrived at Tabreez 8th October, 1823, and got apartments in Mr. Willock's house. We found resident at Tabreez Dr. Cormick, Majors Hart, Monteith, and George Willock, a small but very agreeable party. We took possession of our own house in about three weeks, and on the 29th November Miss Margaret made her appearance. A month after this event I surveyed the town, which seemed to me nothing but a collection of mud walls and huts such as are the abodes of sheep in the Highlands of Scotland. The houses, however, admit of tolerable comfort within, and are almost in every instance ornamented with two rows of niches—the higher in the form of Gothic windows, which has a pretty enough effect, and the lower are convenient as recesses for books, etc., in a country where tables are scarce and bad. On the 18th February, 1824, McNeill was obliged to leave me, and accompany Mr. Willock (who arrived from England about the middle of November) to Teheran, baby being too young to undertake so long a journey at so cold a season. Ten days before his departure Mr. Lushington came from Italy on his way to India, and was our guest till then ; he proved an agreeable, lively inmate. During my widowhood, which lasted till the 3rd of June, I received much kind attention from the gentlemen at Tabreez. The only travellers who visited us were Mr. Wilbraham, from Lancashire, an unaffected, nice young man, and Major Bacon, an old man of mild and pleasing manners, but who certainly would have been better in his own comfortable home. After McNeill's arrival, Mr. Mazarowitch, his lady, and little boy made their appearance. I hailed the arrival of anything rational in petticoats as a boon from heaven! Madame M. I found lady-like, sensible, and pleasant ; but our acquaintance was short, as already we were on the wing for Sultaneeah. At this time a party from India arrived, consisting of Dr. Lamb, the Hon. Captain Keppel, Mr.

Hart, and Mr. Hamilton. They dined with us, and Dr. Lamb took home a card, purse, etc., for my mother."

Tabreez, where the McNeills and other Europeans resided at this time, was the capital of Azerbaeejan, the richest province of Persia. At it Abbas Mirza, the Crown Prince and Governor of the province, had his Court. Mr. Mazarowitch, the Russian Envoy, was away on leave from January, 1823, till July, 1824, Mr. Ambourger acting in his stead.

Dr. McNeill's position was very uncertain ; his time for promotion to full Surgeon was nearly due, and he might be ordered to return to India unless he could be appointed to the new Mission to Persia, which the Home and Indian Governments had at last decided to send from Bombay. Lieutenant-Colonel Kinneir Macdonald was the chosen Envoy. Major Henry Willock was to remain as First Assistant, a Captain J. N. R. Campbell was appointed Second Assistant, and Lieutenant Ranald Macdonald Commander of Escort ; a Surgeon was also appointed, but Mr. McNeill was, on the solicitation of Mr. Elphinstone,* permitted to remain on his present allowances. This arrangement was communicated by a letter from Captain Campbell dated 28th May, 1824, and was received at Teheran 3rd September. In reply to it, John McNeill wrote at some length, explaining how objectionable a Mission from the East India Company, as proposed, was to the Shah :

" TEHERAN,
" *7th September*, 1824.

" MY DEAR CAMPBELL,

" I beg you will accept my sincere thanks for your letter of 27th [28th ?] May, which I received on the 3rd inst. As you are connected with the proposed Mission, I have not had any hesitation in stating to you my sentiments regarding the feeling of this Court on the affair of the transfer of the relations. I beg, however, you will

* The Hon. Mountstuart Elphinstone, then Governor of Bombay.

not conceive yourself at liberty to make use of *this letter* publicly, or to communicate its contents (however well they may be already known) to anybody else than to Major Macdonald.

"When I arrived at Tabreez, about a month before Willock, I found the Prince already aware of the intentions of the Government, and I had some conversation with H.R.H. regarding the new arrangements, of which he seemed to think then rather favourably than otherwise, but he carefully avoided giving a public opinion till he should have assured himself of the sentiments of the Shah on the subject. When he became informed of these, he immediately changed his tone of doubtful approbation for one of decided opposition. His wish, however, still was that the Mission should be permitted to advance, and he scarcely concealed that that wish was dictated by the hope of obtaining presents, though he had no intention of recommending the Shah's Government to accede to the transfer.

"At Teheran the Shah rejected the new arrangement unconditionally, without a moment's consideration. When Willock reached the capital, he was immediately summoned to a conference with the Ministers, to which I accompanied him, and it was obvious that we had been sent for, not to discuss the business, but to hear the determination to which the Shah had already come on the subject. The grounds on which the Persian Government has come to its decision on this matter are partly avowed and partly kept in reserve or concealed. The first and most obvious is the feeling that it has been slighted by being unceremoniously transferred, without being consulted, from the superior to an inferior authority. This is a matter to which it attaches infinite importance, in which it conceives the whole dignity of the nation to be involved, and I have reason to believe that the King's first unfavourable impression of the measure arose from this consideration singly, but after a time it was found that other disadvantages attended the new arrangement.

" The Persian Government began to fear that, if agreed to, it might form a precedent for other Powers, and that they should then run the risk of having Envoys sent to them from the subordinate Governments of Russia and Turkey instead of from the Crowns. This feeling has been much strengthened by a recent remark of M. Mazarowitch, who told one of the Ministers that the Persians now used the Russians so badly as to make it probable that the Court of St Petersburg would in disgust decline further direct intercourse with this Government, and, following the example of the English, hand over the management of the relations to General Yermoloff.* This was, of course, considered an ample confirmation of the justice of the fears which had been expressed.

" You are well aware that whatever Persia may say of her confidence in her own strength, she still considers her connection with Great Britain as her best security against the aggressions of Russia, and the Persian Government is not ignorant that the more intimately it allies herself with European Courts, and the more that Persia is before the eyes of the European public, the more secure she may consider herself. She sees Turkey preserved by the jealousy of European Powers, and she seeks protection from a similar feeling; but the new arrangement would throw her entirely out of the politics of Europe, and would one day force her (so she thinks) to throw herself into the arms of our Government in India, or into those of Russia, with little hope of reserving her independence in either case.

" It is vain to tell a Persian his country is not worth our holding ; he believes it the best in the world, and the object of envy of all nations.

" Persia, however, considers herself secure in leaning on the British Government at home, which she conceives cannot come into contact with her in any matters from which cause of dissension is likely to arise.

" The Persian Government asserts that these were the

* Governor of the Caucasus.

considerations which induced it in 1808 to prefer Sir H. Jones to Sir John Malcolm, though the latter was a known person in the country, much esteemed, and generally beloved, while Sir H. Jones was a stranger, and it has not forgotten that in 1807 an unsuccessful application was made to India for assistance against Russia.

"Notwithstanding all I have said, however, so little faith have I in the consistency of the Persian Court that were it possible to hold out to it any definite, permanent advantage resulting from the arrangement, which should at the same time be considerable, there is a fair chance that it might sacrifice what it now conceives to be its true interests, and agree to the transfer for the purpose of obtaining the minor benefit. But no trifling consideration would, I fear, have the effect—in fact, I do not dare to hope that it could be effected for any price which would not be considered much above its value; and you will perceive that such a mode of negotiating would inevitably produce much subsequent embarrassment.

"Believe me,

"Ever yours,

"J. McNeill."

He also wrote:

To John Wedderburn, Esq., Accountant-General, etc., Bombay.

"Kand, near Teheran,

"*4th September*, 1824.

"I am much indebted to you for your kind letter, and more for the interest which you take in my welfare. You conjectured rightly that I shall remain here if I am permitted to do so. I cannot afford to speculate on chances of distant advantage, or to relinquish a present good without an immediate and certain equivalent. I need not conceal from you that any independent political situation or any situation avowedly political in any quarter would be that most congenial to my feelings and wishes.

"We have managed, after a great battle, to get the

King to agree to receive the Mission at Teheran instead of handing it over to the Government at Shiraz, but this has been accomplished without producing any change in the sentiments of the King on the point at issue. He will receive the Mission, but not retain it; and, if any difficulty arises in consequence, he will send a Mission to England.

"I have never seen the Persian Court so consistent in anything as they have been in this affair, and I firmly believe they will carry it through in the same spirit, unless some *definite considerable* pecuniary advantage could be held out to them. They know that they are ever treated in England as an Independent Government, and they will not allow the British Government to hand them over to a subordinate authority without asking their leave. Their whole idea of the dignity of a Government is involved in this matter; besides, they believe that all they have ever got from the Company has been by request or order of the King's Ministers, and that they require the protection of the Crown against the Company almost as much as against Russia. They believe that our power of protecting them is in Europe, not in Asia. This principle was fully explained to their Ambassador in England, and they are wise enough to prefer the protection they derive from our influence to that which they could obtain from our arms where the former will answer the end. Nothing but the fear of some evil which they cannot otherwise avert, or the hope of some essential advantage which they cannot otherwise obtain, will induce the Ministers or the King to agree to the transfer.

"Believe me ever to be

"Yours very sincerely,

"JOHN MCNEILL."

Another letter to Campbell shows what efforts were being made to coerce the Shah:

"TEHERAN,
"*9th September*, 1824.

"It was hoped that some detail of the splendid preparations for the Mission, which our private letters had

put us in possession of, might perhaps have some effect on the minds of the Ministers—at all events, it was thought worth a trial ; and accordingly, Willock and I went to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and told him that a suitable escort was to accompany the Envoy ; that Willock had been appointed *naib-i-awal* (First Deputy), and you *naib-i-doyen* (Second Deputy) ; that several other officers were attached to the Mission, amongst others, Bunda ;* that the Envoy had the same rank with which General Malcolm came to Persia, and that the etceteras would, of course, be in proportion ; that a man-of-war was in readiness to convey the Mission to Persia, and that everything was on a scale suitable to the dignity of the two great nations ; that the escort, consisting of fifty men, was commanded by an European officer. In short, we made the most of it ; but I am sorry to say I cannot flatter myself with the hope that anything favourable has been effected. The cupidity of the Persians was excited, but their intentions were not changed, nor their determination, so far as we could discover, in any degree shaken, so the matter rests for the present."

By degrees Henry Willock's and John McNeill's arguments were overcoming the difficulties. First Abbas Mirza was won over, and then Mirza Abdul Hassan Khan (formerly Prime Minister, now Minister for Foreign Affairs).

To Major Macdonald.

(Private.)

" MY DEAR SIR, " *11th November*, 1824.

" I have been requested by His Excellency Mirza Abdul Hassan Khan to inform you that, though he had considered it his duty to express without reserve his sentiments on the subject of the transfer of the relations, and to state the objections which he believed to lie against

* Bunda = your slave—*i.e.*, the writer himself.

the measure, still, when he finds H.R.H. Abbas Mirza entertaining opinions at variance with those he had originally professed, and urging the propriety of acceding to a measure which he had strenuously opposed ; and when he finds the British Agent continue to express an anxiety for the success of the new arrangement, he finds reason to doubt the accuracy and soundness of his own view, and, though he cannot induce himself to abandon entirely the fears which he entertained, he is so much inclined to bow to the superior judgment and knowledge of the Prince Royal and the English Government, and so desirous to meet the wishes of both, that he has come to the determination of giving to the new Mission every facility in his power towards accomplishing its object, and trusts that in doing so he may not be compromising the interests of either state.

" Having delivered His Excellency's message, I will venture to offer a few remarks upon it. M. A. H. Khan has uniformly, consistently, and conscientiously opposed the transfer from the moment in which it was proposed. The grounds of his objections I gave at length in my first letter to Captain Campbell. They are in unison with the sentiments of the Shah and of Ameen ud Dowleh—indeed, of all the men in power at Court here and at Tabreez ; but the continued exertions made by Mr. Willock, the renewed appeals to the cupidity of the great, and the consequent change in the sentiments of the Prince and of his Agents here, together with a well-applied present to some of those who were wavering, had left M. A. H. Khan and the King alone on one side of the question, and neither of them having *implicit* confidence in themselves, or in one another, they both wavered. Mirza A. H. Khan, from the fear of the King's being turned against him, has for some time (that is, for some days) withdrawn himself from the discussion, and rather inclined to favour the change. He has, on the whole, behaved more consistently, and I believe more conscientiously, than any Persian who has been connected with the business ;

and I venture to suggest that, as Minister for Foreign Affairs, and a person whose opinion will always have weight in everything connected with Europe, it would be conducive to the interests of the Mission to relieve him from any fear of being considered in opposition, and from any inducement to offer it, by a communication in such terms as you think fit. I suspect he feels hurt that you have not addressed him—he said as much to me to-day, and I took it upon me to say that you had not probably addressed any of the Persian Ministers, and that you were not, when the last letters left India, aware of his appointment to his present office. Mr. Willock proposed that he should write to you privately, but this he declined, and afterwards told me that it was because he had not heard from you.

"I had some hesitation in charging myself with this message, but, finding that His Excellency was not inclined to make the communication through Mr. Willock, from some fear that its having passed through the hands of that gentleman would give it an official stamp and public character, I thought I could more easily account to you for my having taken this liberty than to the Khan for not complying with his wishes, and that, on the whole, it was better to let you know this feeling, as much of your business will be transacted with him.

"I remain, my dear sir,

"Yours very sincerely and obediently,

"JOHN MCNEILL."

Turning our attention from these political difficulties, and returning to their private life, we find that John McNeill wrote to Robert Wilson from Tabreez on 12th February:

"My expenses are now (thanks to Elizabeth) better managed than formerly, and I find that we are living at the rate of £350 a year, and allowing £100 for my expenses at home, there remains a saving of £500 a year, which will continue, I hope, without interruption."

Also on 13th June :

" I returned here a few days ago, having been absent from Elizabeth for nearly four months. We set out in a few days for the King's camp at Sooltaneeah, which is about halfway between this place and Teheran. We shall occupy a good house in a village about twenty miles from Camp, by which we shall avoid the bustle and annoyance, and yet be near enough to visit it when occasion requires. Whether we shall pass next winter here or at Teheran is still doubtful. George Willock, the Chargé's brother and Secretary, is now in India on a Mission from Prince Royal, and I am Acting Secretary, for which I expect 200 rupees a month, or £300 a year besides the honour. As George will probably be absent a year, it will be something."

There are no letters giving an account of the Shah's camp at Sooltaneeah, but the following description is taken from Markham's " History of Persia " :

" True to the wandering habits of his Turkish ancestors, the Shah formed a vast camp, during the summer months, usually on the plain of Sultaniyah, or of Ujain.

" On one side of the camp were the Shah's quarters, surrounded by red canvas screens, called *khanats* or *tejirs*, so pitched to represent the curtains and bastions of a fort, in an oblong form ; and on each side were the tents of officers and guards. The royal enclosure was divided into three compartments. In the first was the *diwan-khanah*, supported by three immense poles, each surmounted by a large golden ball. This tent covered an acre of ground. The second enclosure was called the *miyanah*, and here Fat-h'-Aly had a tent lined throughout with Cashmir shawls, and behind this was the harem.

" Between the Shah's quarters and the first line of tents of the great officers of state was the *maidan*, an open space for reviewing troops, and for parties to play at throwing

the *jerid*. There were usually about 40,000 persons in the royal camp.

"The dress of the Shah while in camp was as magnificent as when he sat in state at Teheran. Fat-h'-Aly wore a purple velvet coat, over which a network of small diamonds was placed.

"His girdle was of gold twist, richly embroidered with pearls, whence hung a scimitar, the scabbard of which blazed in rubies and diamonds. On his head was a bright steel cap, the centre raised to a point and ending in a large diamond, and round it a blue and white Kashmir shawl was twisted."

One wishes that a letter from Elizabeth describing these sights had been preserved, as no doubt she must have written more than one.

The winter of 1824-25 was spent by the McNeills in Teheran, and these months were a time of great happiness. To his sister-in-law, Jane Wilson, John wrote, February, 1825: "I confess that I am happy—very happy."

This was written before the news reached Persia that Elizabeth's much-loved mother had died on 18th November, 1824, and this severe sorrow was followed by another. There is a letter in a clear childish hand from "Elizabeth Innes McNeill, Collonsay, 4th September, 1824," to her "dear Papa and Mama"; but the one that accompanied it from her Aunt Mary speaks anxiously of the child being so thin, and having a severe pain in her side, with a bad cough.

Of the first loss Mrs. McNeill of Collonsay wrote:

"Much do I sympathize with my dear Elizabeth on the loss of this inestimable parent. Few daughters have such a mother to mourn; to every member of her own family she was invaluable, and to all her friends and acquaintances a serious loss. It may truly be said of *her*, 'She lived beloved and died lamented.'"

MARGARET WILSON.

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On 4th March, 1825, the child Innes died. Of her the old Laird wrote :

" It has pleased Heaven to deprive us of the most sensible, the most interesting, child I ever saw or ever can see."

The letters telling of these losses did not reach Persia till the following September.

CHAPTER VI

A PEACEFUL YEAR

1825

During the comparatively peaceful and inactive time enjoyed by Dr. McNeill during the first two years of his married life in Persia he had leisure to indulge in some of the pursuits most congenial to his tastes. The versatility of his interests and the diversity of his talents are noticeable in the appeals made to him by his correspondents. He had been made a member of the Horticultural Society of Great Britain, and is asked to send bulbs and seeds to England; Professor Jamieson, Edinburgh, wants mineral specimens; J. R. Stewart thanks him for coins for his collection; James Ritchie asks him to push the sale of Indian cotton chintzes for a firm in Bombay; another requires statistics of the import trade, and what proportion is carried in British ships. Vaccination he does his best to encourage, and the study of cholera—then a new scourge in Persia—occupies his time. He still sends horses for the remount officer, and keeps greyhounds for his own amusement. James Baillie Fraser, the Persian traveller, who is a great friend, writes often about the book he is going to publish, asking for information to help him in completing it. Of Dr. McNeill's interest in missionary work the following testifies:

"Teheran,
"*17th March*, 1825.

"Sir,

"At the request of Mr. Wolff,* whose truly estimable qualities have gained our entire confidence

* Rev. Joseph Wolff, D.D., LL.D., author of "A Mission to Bokhara," etc., father of Sir Henry Drummond Wolff.

and perfect esteem, I would willingly express my readiness to afford any information regarding the state of Persia which you may be desirous to obtain, so far as I have it in my power to do so, and at the same time wish to assure you of my anxious desire to promote as much as I may be able the success of the schools which Mr. Wolff has established amongst us."

From a series of eighteen questions put to him by Mr. Wolff one or two are quoted, with their answers :

"*Question.*—What do you believe to be required for a missionary in Persia ?

"*Answer.*—In addition to the qualifications which may be necessary to constitute an efficient missionary in any situation, a man undertaking that duty in Persia should be intimately acquainted with the Mahomedan religion, and should be sufficiently versed in the Persian language to argue with fluency, and even to express himself with some degree of elegance. He should be mild and winning in his manner, calm, collected, temperate and fair in argument, of a naturally kind and benevolent heart. He should be dignified in his deportment, simple in his habits, and charitable in his judgment of weaker men. He should be free from bigotry, unfettered by the peculiarities of any sect, and liberal in religious opinions. He should abstain from offensive attacks on the religion of Mahomed, but he should be imbued with a tender feeling for the beauty and poetry of Scripture. An acquaintance with science, more especially with astronomy, would give him a reputation for general learning, which might be of signal advantage.

"*Question.*—What impression do you believe has Henry Martyn made on the minds of the Persians ?

"*Answer.*—Henry Martyn produced in Persia a greater impression than any other man could now hope to do, for he was not only admirably calculated for the under-

taking, but he was perhaps the first Christian divine who showed himself superior to the Persians in all the learning on which they most valued themselves. I doubt whether Martyn made any converts, but he elicited a spirit of inquiry and discussion which had not existed before his time, and he taught the Persians to respect a religion that instilled into its votaries the lofty principles of virtue and benevolence which they admired in him.

"*Question.*—What is the state of their national schools ?

"*Answer.*—Almost every village in Persia has its school, the cost of which is paid by the parents of the children taught in it, or by the inhabitants generally. In small villages the priest is the schoolmaster, and the teachers at all times are classed among the divines. The children are taught to read and write the Persian and to read the Arabic, but the lower orders do not understand the latter. The proportion of children taught to read and write is very large."

The following letters from Mr. W. Blackwood, the founder of the great Edinburgh publishing firm of that name, are evidence of John McNeill's literary talent, and of Mr. Blackwood's opinion of Elizabeth McNeill's powers:

"EDINBURGH,
"*23rd March*, 1824.

"DEAR SIR,

"'The Mirza's First Visit'* I was quite delighted with, but on showing it to a certain friend of ours, who is not apt to start at trifles, he was afraid the Harem in this cold climate would be thought too warm. It gave me great pleasure, therefore, to receive the 'Second Visit,' and the real merit of the production was then quite apparent, and of its being a genuine Persian production there could not be any doubt, or at least that it was written by one who described what he had actually seen. The whole was printed in No. 85, and I am happy to tell

* "Visits to the Harem," by Mirza Ahmed Tubeeb; *Blackwood's Magazine*, bound volumes xv., xvi., xviii., by John McNeill.

you that my expectations have been quite fulfilled, for it has met with a most favourable reception, and all our readers are wearying for the continuation. Descriptions like Mirza's of actual manners and romantic adventures are the things most wanted for the *Maga*. The story of Meiram is most interesting and beautifully told. Morier has published 'The Adventures of Hajji Baba,' which has been a good deal talked about; but I think the Mirza is a far more delightful personage."

"*6th May*, 1825.

"I shall be rejoiced to receive continued accounts of Mrs. McNeill and her little Persian enjoying good health. Be so good as to remind her of her promise to give me something for *Maga*. One of her letters would delight everyone. The Sheriff of Perthshire* has been in London during this short vacation, and has, I see, had a good deal to do in Appeal Cases for the House of Lords. His business is increasing every day. Mr. Lockhart† is going on as usual, but he has not done any work since 'Matthew Wold.' For some time he has been engaged upon an edition of Shakespeare, which has occupied most of his spare time. Mr. Sym‡ one knows no difference upon: he d——ns the Whigs and the Pluckless as cordially as ever. 'The Inheritance'§ is one of the most sensible books I have published. I sold the first edition of upwards of three thousand in less than six months, and I have already sold nearly one thousand of the second edition. 'Matthew Wold' has also been very successful, but it would have been still more so if the conclusion had not been so painful. It is a work of great power. I have published another poem from Hogg. It is a very singular produc-

* Duncan McNeill, afterwards Lord Colonsay.
† Son-in-law of Sir Walter Scott.
‡ Who wrote in *Blackwood's Magazine* as "Timothy Tickler," uncle of Elizabeth McNeill.
§ By Miss Ferrier.

tion, and you will be much struck both with its gross absurdities and great beauties.

"The author of Waverley's new novel, 'The Crusaders,' which was to have appeared before Christmas, is not yet ready, but is expected in a week or two."

John Gibson Lockhart was a friend of both, but especially of Elizabeth's. He writes to her from Cheifswood 21st July, 1824:

"Many thousand thanks, my dear Mrs. McNeill, or Khanam, or—by whatever more appropriate title Elizabeth Wilson that was should now be addressed—for the very welcome epistle which reached this place of repose and cigar-smoking yesterday morning. . . . It is a high gratification to see your own handwriting, and to hear yourself, as it were, talk of yourself, your lord, your child, your magnificence, and your happiness, to which, I suppose, all these do not contribute in quite equal proportions. . . . Mr. Whigham's sigh need not inspire little Margaret's mimic powers now; he has been married for three months, and it was wonderful how speedily he degenerated on that consummation. His mishap of love had almost made him a subject for certain romantic contemplation; but when my wife and I went to *call* in a week or two, and found the pair eating bread-and-butter and marmalade together in their drawing-room about two o'clock p.m. we agreed that this was all over. . . . I do not know Miss T., but hear in Queen Street she is not one of the houris that Mahomet would have chosen. . . . The Great Unknown is in his usual feather. He has written two more novels this year. Abbotsford is now complete, and 'tis really a grand château."

These letters, which took so long to reach the exiles, must have been a source of very great pleasure, especially to Mrs. McNeill, who was so often obliged to be for months without her husband, and who had no European

woman to speak to except her child's nurse, Mrs. Robinson.

Meanwhile the Mission, assembled at Bombay, which had been so long a subject of contention and of unsuccessful negotiation, was dissolved in July, 1825, and the officers composing it returned to their regiments, the Envoy alone being retained on his full pay and allowances, waiting further instructions. Captain Campbell says :

" Even the favourable change in the sentiments of the Prince Royal did not offer sufficiently strong inducements to the Governor-General to authorize our departure." And he continues : " We are perpetually reprobating the capricious and vacillating conduct of the Persians, but has our own, I ask, through the whole train of our negotiations with them, been more firm or consistent ? We have invariably dazzled or threatened them into compliance with our views when it suited our convenience, and as shamefully neglected them when we had nothing more to gain."

It was during this year that Dr. McNeill proposed making an arduous journey for political purposes. A much curtailed outline of the scheme is here given. How he could make up his mind to leave his young wife and child for such a long time and to expose himself to such risks does not appear.

Note of Proposed Journey.

" I would propose to proceed by way of Yezd to Herat, avoiding in my progress all intercourse with persons who might be likely to consider my leaving Persia in that direction as connected with a political object, and should therefore make my way to the frontier by as short and unfrequented a route as possible. . . . My manner of living would, of course, be very quiet, and my expenses would be regulated as nearly as might be convenient by the extent of my gains in practice. I think it probable that I might be detained a month at Herat, as I should

there endeavour to gain accurate information which might assist in directing my inquiries in the countries towards which I propose to travel. I should consider the chief objects towards which I ought to direct my attention in every place : First, the domestic government ; second, foreign relations ; third, revenue ; fourth, population ; fifth, military force ; sixth, extent of territory ; seventh, trade ; eighth, manufactures ; ninth, climate and its productions ; tenth, tenure of land ; eleventh, religious matters ; twelfth, education and literature ; thirteenth, antiquities ; fourteenth, coins ; fifteenth, tribes in the surrounding country ; sixteenth, chiefs and principal families ; seventeenth, manners, customs, and character of the people ; eighteenth, country improving or decaying ; nineteenth, changes which may be expected to take place ; twentieth, routes to various places ; and, lastly, any matters of general interest which might be elicited during my inquiries.

" From Herat I would propose to go to Kandahar ; from Kandahar to Kabool, where I might be induced to remain a longer time, and from whence I might make excursions into the Hazaurah country as far as Baumian, and perhaps also into Kafferistan. I should consider it one of the chief objects of my journey to obtain accurate intelligence at Kabool, for I imagine that the agents of a distant Government would, in going to a country divided as Afghanistan now is, be directed to the Chief who possessed a capital, in preference to others of perhaps equal power in the country. At Kabool, therefore, I would seek occasion to practise physic amongst the persons about the Khan, and such an occasion is seldom wanting in Eastern countries.

" From Kabool I would proceed to Peshawar, where I might remain a few days, and thence go on to Lahore. . . . From Lahore I would propose to go to Kashmere, and there arrange matters for a journey to Bulkh. In the event of my finding that route practicable, I should go through Kashkhaur and Badukhshan, and if this should

prove to be impossible I would return to Peshawar and Kabool, and try to get through the mountains, or, if this too should be impracticable, I should then return to Herat, and go with the first *Koplah* from thence to Bulkh or Bokhara, whichever might seem most advantageous. . . .

"It would be difficult to make an estimate of even the probable expense of such a journey. The current expenses would certainly be small, but circumstances might occur which would call for a more liberal expenditure on some particular occasion, and it is desirable to have the confidence which the command of funds, should they become necessary, would afford. I would therefore propose that a credit of 1,000 tomâns* be procured on some Hindu merchant of Herat, from whence bills could be obtained on Kandahar, Kabool, etc., where they could be again renewed on Peshawar, and so forth throughout. The whole of this sum would not, in all human probability, be required or expended, but the journey would occupy at least twelve months, and allowing 300 rupees a month for all current expenses, presents, etc. (which, as I would take two servants and three horses, is probably not too much), there will remain a sum of 3,000 rupees to meet any extraordinary contingency. The case to which I more particularly refer is the possible one that I may be taken prisoner, and find myself obliged to ransom myself and my people, and against this possible case I think it necessary to be prepared.

"I shall travel as an European physician, though in native dress, and shall represent myself as travelling to practise or to obtain employment. I am inclined to think that no character would be better fitted to gain me ready access to all classes on favourable and confidential terms, and none which I could long continue to support better calculated to gain me respect or afford me security. It has these great advantages: that, if recognized, I am not detected in any imposture, and that I am not called upon

* One tomân = 8s. 4d.

to act any part but one which is natural to me—viz., to practise my profession.

"I feel the utmost confidence that I shall be able, not only to visit the different places I propose to go to, but also to bring from them much useful information. As I have proposed no demand on the Government in case I should succeed, so I beg that, if I fail, they will believe I have been thwarted by obstacles which it was not in my power to remove or to surmount."

This remarkable enterprise, which had the full approval of the Hon. Mountstuart Elphinstone, Governor of Bombay, was never carried out, owing to the following letter from the Envoy, Colonel Macdonald, to Dr. McNeill. A journey of an almost identical nature was afterwards carried out by Alexander Burnes.

"BOMBAY,
"18*th July*, 1825.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"You will perceive by a despatch which goes by this opportunity that Willock is authorized to depute you into Chorassan; but now that all obstacles are removed to your appointment by the resignation of Dr. MacGrath, we sincerely hope that you will, at least for the present, abandon the design.

"I have heard nothing from any quarter regarding the Mission since George Willock left us, and of the prospect of my ultimate advance you will be a better judge than I am. Much will, I imagine, depend on the feelings and decision of the Persian Court unless orders are received from England in the interim. If it be my fortune to proceed, I make bold to entreat of you to meet me either at Shiraz or Bushire, as I could ill dispense with your assistance.

"Yours very sincerely,
"J. MACDONALD."

A month before the above letter was written, and long before it reached Persia, the Chargé d'Affaires believed that Colonel Macdonald's Mission had actually started,

and he directed Mr. McNeill, in the following gratifying terms, to go to meet it :

" Having received intelligence of the prospect of Colonel Macdonald's departure from Bombay on the 15th April, I have to request that you will hold yourself in readiness to proceed to meet him at Bushire.

" Mirza Baba, the Persian Secretary, and Noor Mahomed Beg will accompany you.

" You will deliver to the Envoy the four books containing the public correspondence from this Court from the commencement of the year 1822 to the present period. . . . I cannot part with you without expressing my sense of the valuable assistance you have so readily afforded me in all the trying situations we have been together placed in at this Court.

" You have now acted above a year, in the absence of Major George Willock, as Secretary to His Majesty's Mission, and I have had satisfaction in observing that the advantage you have studied to derive from the confidence reposed in you by the Ministers and Nobles of this Court, founded on a just appreciation of the qualities of your heart and mind, has been the promotion of the public interest.

" I trust that your services with His Majesty's Mission may prove a recommendation to your future advantage."

He also wrote to Lord Amherst, the Governor-General of India :

" I have great pleasure in calling to the notice of your Lordship the high sense I entertain of the services of Mr. McNeill, of the Bombay Medical Establishment, attached to this Mission."

When Mr. McNeill had gone nine days of his journey, he received intelligence that the Mission was again postponed, so he returned, and accompanied his wife and child to a village in the hills for the sake of the latter. It was while there that they received the letters about Innes's death.

CHAPTER VII

RUSSO-PERSIAN COMPLICATIONS

1826

The parts which the Chargé d'Affaires and his Secretary had now to play became increasingly difficult—not only as regards the reception of the British Mission, but with regard to Russo-Persian matters.

Since the Treaty of Goolistan in 1814 there had been nominal peace on the borders of Russia, but the conduct of the Governor of Georgia was irritating and contemptuous towards the Persians. The frontier had never been clearly defined, and at last a Russian army crossed the Arras and occupied Gokeheh. The Shah tried to settle the Russian border difficulties by negotiation, but the respectable Envoy he sent was not allowed to proceed beyond Tiflis, and fresh demands were made that further lands should be evacuated by Persia.

"The death of the Emperor Alexander, the confusion caused by the annunciation of Constantine as his successor, and the subsequent abdication of the throne in favour of Nicholas, suspended the negotiations for a time. As soon as the power of Nicholas was known to be established, Fetteh Ali Shah prepared to send an Embassy to St. Petersburg, but before arrangements could be made it was announced that Prince Menzikoff was on his way to Persia, to intimate the succession of Nicholas, and to remove the causes of difference which had arisen between the Governments of Georgia and Persia."* It thus

* From an article on Persia in *Blackwood's Magazine*, by John McNeill.

happened that when the long-delayed British Mission left India, and approached Persia from the south, the Russian Mission was also approaching it from the north. At one time it was thought probable that both Missions would arrive at the Shah's camp about July, 1826, and if so some thirty Europeans would have met on Persian soil. Mr. Willock and Mr. McNeill, however, were strongly of opinion that this would be inadvisable.

From the disturbed state of internal affairs in Russia, the Persian Crown Prince and some of the Ministers gathered hopes that the fighting power of that country would be so weakened as to give them some chance of success if war ensued.

Abbas Mirza's policy had always been to draw all foreign agents and negotiations to his Court at Tabreez, and the Shah had never ventured to act in opposition to H.R.H.'s opinion in such matters. On 7th May the Shah directed Mirza Abdul Hassan Khan to ask Mr. Willock whether the Russian Envoy should be detained at Tabreez or allowed to proceed to the King's camp. It was a question by no means easy to answer. After weighing it well, John McNeill's opinion was that there was more chance of a peaceful result from the negotiations if the Russian Mission were received first at the Court of the Crown Prince, partly "to prevent the Prince from being induced by jealousy to thwart all endeavours to arrange matters, which he has the power to do." Also "to allow the unnatural excitement which exists on this subject to abate," and "to give time to show that the disturbances in Russia were not likely to be of a nature which would much affect the efficiency of her operations in a war with Persia."

The general policy, however, advocated by Mr. McNeill, which is given at great length in his notes, is that the British should very carefully avoid being drawn into the discussion between Russia and Persia. The Persians were very anxious to embroil the English in the matter, both for the purpose of arousing jealousy between the

European Powers and of endeavouring to draw from the Envoy an admission that the Russians were the aggressors.

It will be remembered that under the Treaty of Teheran, 1814, England was bound to aid with troops or pay a subsidy of 200,000 tomâns annually in case of invasion, provided that Persia was not the aggressor. Russia and England were allies, so a very difficult situation had arisen. Mr. Willock felt that his position was not such as to warrant his authoritative interference, and the new Envoy who was on his way merely represented the Indian Government, and had no power to deal with foreign affairs. The Shah and his Ministers were, however, deceiving themselves with the false hope that Colonel Macdonald could be held responsible for promises made by the British Foreign Office.

Among John McNeill's "Notes" are short studies of the characters of the chief persons at the Persian Court. Of Abbas Mirza he says :

"For some time the Prince will treat the Envoy in the most distinguished and flattering manner ; he will then make propositions for their assistance from the Indian Government in maintaining troops, and if his wishes are not complied with to the fullest extent, he will commence a system of petty intrigue and annoyance. . . . In short, in every communication with Abbas Mirza on every subject the Envoy must be prepared for every description of meanness, deceit, and treachery, which is made most dangerous by a manner calculated to win everyone, and a plausible, unaffected, and fluent style of conversation fitted to inspire the fullest confidence."

This very candid opinion of the Prince is followed by one of Allah Yeir Khan, a son-in-law of the Shah's, who had been raised to the post of Prime Minister :

"He is a man of little talent, but having been brought up entirely at Court and much about the King's person, he has acquired a knowledge of the Shah's feelings which enables him to make himself acceptable."

Allah Yeir Khan remained seated when he received M. Mazarovitch, and Mr. McNeill says :

" Our Envoy ought not to wait upon him without making it a matter of previous stipulation that he should not repeat this unseemly, insolent proceeding ; " adding : " As he is Prime Minister, he will expect to receive the first visit and large presents."

Of Ameer ud Dowlah (Amir of State) he says :

" He has been out of favour, but it is thought will be brought forward again. He is intimately acquainted with the internal affairs of the empire, and is master of all matters connected with finance ; is indolent and dilatory, but fair and just ; is well inclined to the British Government. He will expect presents from the Envoy.

" Mirza Abdul Wahab, Moatamed ud Dowlah (Faithful of the State), is a man of talent and learning, of pleasing manners, and even of delicate sentiments of honour. He has lost his influence with the Shah. A man whom everyone must like, a delightful companion, but so indolent that there is no getting him to set seriously about any business.

" Maunchehr Khan Bashee is a man of very acute and sound understanding. It would be of great importance to gain him from the Russian party. He is at present the man of greatest influence at Court. Presents should be given to him, and handsome ones.

" Mahmoud Khan Koleraghosee Bashee, the Master of the Ceremonies, is a very lively, agreeable, jovial man, well read in Eastern history, never known to make mischief, friendly and well disposed, and much too fond of wine.

" Mrs. Macdonald ought to send presents to the Taj ud Dowleh, the favourite wife of the Shah. She is a woman of strong sense, of acute perceptions, and of great prudence. She does not interfere much in public matters, but when she does, it is always with effect."

There are a good many other précis of the characters of the people of the Court and Government, but enough

has been given to show how valuable an assistant, in his diplomatic work, John McNeill was likely to be to the Envoy. Though they had not yet met, the letter already quoted from Colonel Macdonald, shows that he fully appreciated the assistance the Surgeon appointed to his Mission would probably render him, in other than medical matters.

During the early part of 1826 most of the correspondence is about the approaching Missions and rumours of war on the Georgian border. The chief event of private importance was the birth of another daughter on 12th March, who was named Hester Mary. Mrs. McNeill's time was greatly occupied with the care of the delicate elder child, Margaret, but she found time to copy letters for her husband, and her discretion was such that he could entirely trust her with all his diplomatic difficulties. The following is an account of her first visit to the royal harem, and is written to her sister :

"TABREEZ,
"*22nd July*, 1826.

"MY DEAREST JANE,

"This moment I have been informed that a Tartar goes this evening. My pen must run on busily, for having at last made out my long-talked-of visit to the Royal Harem, I have much to write you about. I am under Dr. Cormick's charge here, John having gone to meet Macdonald, who is now at Isphahan. Margaret has been very ill since we came here, but is now better. Hessie is a lovely little creature, good-humoured, and as fat as a little pig. The packet from Europe containing, I trust, many letters for me, has gone on to Sooltaneeah to Mr. Willock, and I must have patience for at least ten days. God grant it may contain good tidings of my own beloved family! Of ourselves I will say no more at present, but go on to detail my visit, which was in all respects most gratifying. Oh, how our sainted mother would have enjoyed the description I am now about to

write! My selfish heart must ever, ever deplore her, glorified as she now is, removed from every care, and reaping the reward of the good steward. You know that John was fortunate enough to cure the Shah's favourite wife, and likewise one of her children. She has been most grateful for it, and again and again invited me to visit her. Several times I was prevented by Margaret's illness, then by my own situation and subsequent confinement. At last, about a week before we left Teheran, all things proved propitious, and I sent to say I would come. The next day was appointed, and we set out as follows: Myself on a led horse, dressed in white satin with broad lace flounces, my blue stones, etc.; Mag in a bobbinette dress over pale blue satin, with Jessie Beatson's beautiful cap newly done up; Hester Mary in virgin white; and Robertson in a brown poplin gown she got from our beloved mother. My outward garb was a great wide cloak of crimson silk lined with pale blue, and a large *calash* of the same. You are aware that the point of a lady's finger even dare not be seen in Persia. I had four *running* footmen of my own before me, and three of Mr. Willock's behind me. I dismounted in a dark gateway, and was there received by Aga Mabauric, the Eunuch of the lady, who conducted us through the court in which were his own apartments, to that in which was the habitation of the Queen. On entering this court I was received by the *great* wife of Mirza Abdul Hassan Khan (the late Ambassador to England) and several female attendants, and conducted into an open apartment, in which I put off my cloak and hood and having resumed my outside shoes, moved to the opposite side of the court, and entered the lobby of the great hall. When we came to the door of the hall, before we had yet entered it we made a *low bow*, and having crossed the threshold of another and a third before *sitting*, which we were ordered to do. The Queen was seated nearly opposite to the door, and took no notice of our obeisances till, a chair having been brought, she desired me to be

seated. I declined the honour, and sat down, like the others, on the *felt* (a kind of border carpet which goes round the room in Persia). The room was covered on three sides with mirror, as was also the roof. The fourth side was one great window of stained glass, arranged in pretty devices, which reached from the floor to the roof. The door by which we entered was in the centre of one side of the room, and between the corresponding one on the opposite side and the window sat Her Majesty, supported on each side by one of her daughters. In the corners of the room stood slave girls, and opposite to us sat a Princess, the wife of one of the King's sons. Nothing could exceed the splendour, the magnificence, the dazzling richness and brilliancy of the scene. The slave girls were blazing in diamonds and rubies, brocade and spangles. Their dresses, originally of the richest stuffs, were so closely embroidered with pearls and precious stones that little else could be seen. Their hair hung loose, and their heads were ornamented in various ways with jewels. Their dress was of a form not inelegant, and full of stateliness. It consisted of a close bodice, and a very wide petticoat that stuck out like a hoop, and so long that when they moved their feet were invisible, and they seemed to be sailing slowly over the smooth carpet without any bodily exertion, as if they were transported by magic.

"The Queen sat on a crimson velvet cloth which was richly embroidered with pearls, and reclined against a large square cushion of the same materials, with this difference only, that the pearls were here so close together as to leave almost no portion of the velvet visible. Her own dress was most magnificent. The precious stones alone cost, independent of setting, about £150,000. On the niche above her head was placed the crown of the Shah (an exquisite thing), and on each side of it a Persian black lamb's skin cap, ornamented with sprays of the largest diamonds. Beside her lay the famous armlets of the Shah, in one of which is the diamond

called the 'Sea of Light.' In the various other niches were candlesticks, dressing materials, basins, and caskets, all of the purest gold and precious stones. The niches were in two rows, one about three feet from the ground, the higher about eight feet from the ground. In a border between the rows of niches, about a foot deep, and covered with glass, were portraits of Europeans—men, women, and children—drawn by a native artist, and most diverting figures they were. The high niches were occupied by a profusion of the richest china vases and basins of Eastern and European workmanship. The carpets were exquisite. The centre of the room was occupied by a square of china vases, filled with the choicest flowers. After we had sat a few minutes, a slave girl went out of the room, and presently returned bearing a golden ewer inlaid with emeralds. This contained rose-water, with which I was besprinkled. Then Manucheer Khan, the Shah's chief eunuch, was called in, and conversed for some time with the lady, the conversation being chiefly in praise of my husband and other compliments. After this coffee was served in small china cups placed in cups a little larger of gold and emeralds. My babes were now introduced. Margaret, terrified out of her wits by the glare of the diamonds, could not be prevailed upon to approach the throne, cried for her *Maidee*, and was carried off in disgrace. Hester received a royal embrace, and was pronounced a beauty. A course of sweetmeats was now served on golden plates, and sherbets in magnificent vases inlaid with precious stones. I now offered to depart, but Manucheer Khan said that Her Majesty would retire to prayers, and that after her return I should be permitted to depart. She then rose and walked out, accompanied by her daughters, whose heads were ornamented by long bunches of golden threads as fine as hair, that waved and shone as they walked. The door curtains were of rose-coloured satin, embroidered with gold in elegant patterns, and lined with cloth of gold. Her Majesty smoked the *kalioun* several times. It was of gold, inlaid

with emeralds and large diamonds. After she retired Manucheer Khan (whom I like much) took me round the room, explained the uses of everything to me, *seated* me on the throne, gave me the crown and armlets to examine ; in short, did everything he could to render my visit amusing.

"After Her Majesty returned and was again seated, I went with Manucheer Khan to see her bedroom. It was carpeted with black velvet, richly embroidered with pure gold, and in a corner was a large mattress and pillow of the same. On the ground near the couch lay two rosaries of very large pearls, and one of emerald beads. On the ground also lay two small caskets of gold and emeralds. The one contained pins, the other some of *John's* pills. On the opposite side of the room lay, cased in gold wire and pearls and covered by a gauze veil embroidered with pearls, the Koran, on an Arab reading-desk of gold and precious stones, and beside it another large rosary of pearls.

"On returning, the Queen made me sit close beside her, called in the children again, and was most gracious. Then we had fruit and tea, and I was told I might depart. On rising up to do so, the wife of the Shah's son said the Taj-i Dowlah begged my acceptance of a shawl, in which she enveloped me, clasping the same on my shoulder with a large ornament of diamonds, rubies, emeralds, and pearls. On each of the children's caps ornaments of jewels were fastened, and as Hester had found favour in the eyes of the Shah, the Queen put on her a beautiful little pair of pearl bracelets. I have reason to believe that the old gentleman had a peep at me through some *hidy-hole*, but, as it might be supposed *improper*, he will never confess it. The whole concluded by a slave girl decorating Robertson in a handsome black shawl (cashmere), of which you may be sure she is not a little proud. I kissed the royal hand at parting, and said I was sorry I had not enough of the language to express all I felt. So ended our first visit, and we returned with

our riches to the English Palace, on the steps of which we found Mr. Willock, Mr. Shee, and Papa, all dying with impatience to hear the account of the secret place. I have written this so hurriedly that I am sure I have forgotten many things, but I intend to set John to work to make an article of it, when you will see it in better style. No box has yet arrived from either Blackwood or Oriel, but we hope next Tartar will bring us both.

"I feel sorry that I am obliged again to trouble you with more commissions, but if I do not I shall soon be threadbare, having got no addition since my marriage to my wardrobe. John has written to his agent to remit £50 to Robert, to be given to you to pay for my things, and you must make a little account book and note down what you receive, and pay on my account. John wishes me to get a *murone* velvet gown, trimmed with Vandyke lace, for paying royal visits in. I would like it with longish sleeves, and half up to the neck. If you can get broad Vandyke lace to *stand up* round the skirt, I think it would be admired here. Let it be rich-looking. The bobbinette lace is as good for this country as any other. I would like a bobbinette dress with long sleeves, and a yard or so of bobbinette for handkerchiefs. I would like a neat *drest cap*—something in the Queen Mary style, of materials that would *wash* and *last*, also a common morning cap. Two pair of stays with steel busks. I think Elizabeth Brown's woman has my measure. I like them very low in front. From Gregory two pair white satin slippers, two pair black satin slippers, two pair black kid ditto, two pair neat walking *ties*, and two pair of ties of Denmark satin. Let them be rather easy, as a tight shoe is disagreeable in hot weather. I want a tortoiseshell comb with a high head, the largest you can find. You may remember the one I gave twenty-three shillings for. My dressing-table one night took fire, and it was destroyed. The one I now wear is very shabby. Send me a few pairs of habit gloves drest and common. I likewise want a few toys for presents to the children

in the harem. Such things are unknown here, and would be valued. They must be things that would not take much room, such as snuff-boxes with figures that start up in them, serpents, a small Noah's ark, and *nest of boxes*, etc. I trust much to your good taste. I would like a wreath of moss-roses with buds for my hair, and one or two artificial flowers. Anything formerly written for that you have not sent you may send in this box. Blackwood or Robert Low would, I dare say, get it booked and sent off to the care of Mr. Cartwright, Consul-General, Constantinople. I think you might trust my miniatures in this box, were you to get a good lock put on it, with a small key, which you might enclose in a letter to Mr. Cartwright, put into the Post-Office in London, with an inventory of the contents of the box. He corresponds with John, and is most obliging to us. I would like you to execute these commissions as soon as convenient; they take such a time in coming. No European dress of any kind is to be got here, or I would not give you all this trouble. Kindest love to all from

"Your ever most affectionate,

"E. McNEILL.

"P.S.—Fill up any spare corner with darning-cotton and white floss-silk."

For an account of the reception of the approaching British Mission at one of its stopping-places on the way we are indebted to George Willock, who accompanied it. It had not been, after all, thought necessary that Dr. McNeill should go to Bushire to meet it, as Dr. Riach was attached to the suite from that place, and George Willock was with it to give information on political matters. Other letters show that Colonel Macdonald was not pleased that his wish to have Dr. McNeill to meet him had not been gratified.

From George Willock.

"ISPAHAN,
"*26th July*, 1826.

"MY DEAR MCNEILL,

". . . To commence, I will say that our reception here has been most flattering, executed in a very masterly style, without parade or labour to either party. As far as Ghomesha, fruit and sweetmeats were sent to the Envoy from the Prince and Khoosroo Khan, entrusted to respectable people, who offered the congratulations of the High and Mighty.

"Two *fursungs* beyond Mayan, Kooli Khan, at the head of a large party of horse, met us, and a large tent at the village was pitched for the great man. Sweets and fruits were presented in abundance. At Ispahan similar attentions were paid, Kooli Khan still *honouring* us with his company.

"Our entry into Ispahan was as grand as could be arranged. Princes, a Shah's second cousin, heads of tribes, servants of the household, Mirzas in office, principal inhabitants of the city, merchants, and thousands of horse and footmen.

"Two palaces were carpeted and prepared for our residence: one, the Hasht duri Behult,* in the Chahar Bagh; the other, Haft Dust outside of the city. The Haft Dust was chosen, as affording greater accommodation for the suite.

"After a day's rest, the ceremonies of the first introduction were negotiated. Khoosroo Khan, to my surprise, wished to put off his visit until the Envoy had waited upon the Prince. This plan, however, was not approved of, and the Khan on the third day made his appearance. He expected the Colonel would have advanced some way out of the room to receive him, and many Bismillahs were uttered ere he would step across the threshold. The visit, however, went off well, though Khoosroo

* *I.e.*, seven pearls of Paradise.

practised some dignified trifles. The Minister also continued the points of etiquette to be preserved towards the Prince, whose rank, it was said, was superior to the Prince of Shiraz. The chief apartment of the new palace is divided by a window. The Prince and the Envoy could not sit in the same division, and it was not till after some words that this difficulty was surmounted in our favour. Then arose another difficulty—the impropriety of being seated before the pictures of the Shah an Shah, a privilege which could not be admitted. Many contrivances were suggested, and at last two large green curtains were hung before His Majesty, who was thus rendered invisible. Much parade displayed in going to the Palace. The visit went off well, the Prince speaking little, with propriety. He was seated on a raised platform covered with *mummuds*. He looked very well, was neatly and modestly dressed. Having once got over the usual follies of first introduction, the kindness and good sense of Khoosroo Khan has broken through the cloud. All arrangements have been made without ostentation, in a most liberal, gentlemanly manner, unattended with any considerable expense to us. There has been a constant display of minor civilities, and we have been supplied with provisions since our arrival. Indeed, we could not have been treated better or with more attention, and everything has been done without a single demonstration of Shiraz cupidity. Macdonald has expressed himself perfectly satisfied with the Prince and Khoosroo Khan. I should hope that our friend will long continue in office. A small, yet nice, present has been sent to the Prince, consisting of a very handsome rifle, a pair of double-barrelled pistols, a telescope, and set of china. One of nearly similar articles has been given to Khoosroo. The return, I believe, will be made in horses.

"*Sunday, Tyran, second stage from Ispahan.*—I never praised a Persian in my life without having after cause of regret. Khoosroo Khan has behaved very shabbily

about presents which were not the least sought after; on the contrary, a battle was fought to prevent the sending of them. He sent an old battered horse of some blood from himself, and two large Turkomans of little value from the Prince. He did not think proper to pay a parting visit to the Colonel, which, I think, he should have done, and these are the amount of his offences. . . .

"Very affectionately yours,

"GEORGE WILLOCK."

Against more prudent counsels, the Shah decided to receive the Russian Envoy at his own camp, and Prince Menzikoff arrived there in July, 1826. Instead of being empowered to investigate calmly and impartially the occurrences on the frontier, and to redress them, the Prince declared he had no instructions on the most important point at issue—*i.e.*, the occupation of Gokcheh. Those Persians who had been clamorous for war now called upon the Shah to appeal to arms. The country was in a ferment headed by the mullahs, who resented the wanton interference of the Russian authorities in Georgia with the religious prejudices of their Mohammedan subjects, and before the Russian Envoy could retire from the Court, war had begun in earnest, Abbas Mirza being the first to commence actual hostilities.

On 3rd September the British Mission, which had purposely advanced very slowly, reached the royal camp. John McNeill, writing to his father from Tabreez on 5th September, says:

"Since I last wrote to you I have joined the Mission under Colonel Macdonald, who received me in a very friendly manner, and considered me worthy to be sent before him into the Royal Camp, to arrange the form of his reception, etc. I mentioned to you the commencement of a war between Russia and Persia. After the remarks I then made, you will be surprised to hear that hitherto the Persians have carried everything before them, and have in a few days recovered almost all the provinces

they had ceded after their last war. This success is solely to be attributed to the almost universal disaffection of the subjects of Russia in these provinces, and perhaps may have been made more easy by the supine security of the Russians. Reinforcements must, however, arrive from the north, and I much fear the progress of the war will be very difficult from its commencement. Russia has, however, been a great loser, for all that she has done to settle her Georgian provinces has been overturned, and if she succeeds in driving back the Persians (which I have no doubt she will), she will have to recommence her government under the greatest disadvantages, for when she first entered into these countries the population was favourable to her, and it is now, with almost no exception, against her."

The moment the reception of the Envoy was satisfactorily concluded, John McNeill asked permission to go to his wife and children, as little Margaret was still very unwell.

On 22nd September Elizabeth wrote to her brother :

" My darling little Margaret has been again dangerously ill—still is so. God only knows what will be the result at last of these painful, weary attacks. Were she to suffer for another year what she has suffered for the one now past, my prayer to the Almighty would be to take her innocent soul into Eternity. My infant is well, and John, thank God, in perfect health."

The child terminated her short life of pain on the morning of 3rd October. Her father, writing to Jane Wilson six days later, says :

" Elizabeth has shown her usual strength of mind, and amidst all her grief has behaved with composure. Her desire to prevent the affliction of her own mind from injuring the infant she was nursing gave force to her natural resolution."

John, though he felt this keenly, had little time for private sorrows; public affairs ever claimed his attention.

The question as to whether the British Envoy should reside chiefly at Tabreez, in close touch with the Crown Prince; or at Teheran, near the Court of the reigning Shah, next occupied his attention. He has left a long note on the subject, carefully weighing the pros and cons, and recommending that Colonel Macdonald should remain at Tabreez, and Henry Willock should represent him at Teheran. At first, at any rate, the bulk of the suite remained at Tabreez, in deference to the strongly expressed wishes of Abbas Mirza. The Envoy himself proceeded to Teheran, arriving there 3rd December, and Dr. McNeill was one of those who accompanied him.

In August Henry Willock had been sent to London to give information at the Foreign Office regarding the Russo-Persian War. Before leaving, he wrote this letter to his brother and John McNeill:

"GENTLEMEN,

"At the close of my Mission I feel that I should not be doing justice to you, or fulfilling what is required of myself, did I not notice my sense of your merits and services. Since my return to Persia in the autumn of 1823 I have received from His Majesty's Government repeated tokens of approbation, and I feel that your zealous co-operation and support have enabled me to fulfil the expectations of my employers. In short, I feel that it has been my good fortune to have attached to me officers capable of fulfilling much more important duties than those they have been called on to execute, and whose abilities, I hope, may hereafter be exercised in more distinguished offices."

In a private letter to McNeill he says: "It has not been the lot of all people to be assisted by such men as you and George."

Mrs. Macdonald, Mrs. McNeill, and George Willock were amongst those who remained at Tabreez. The letters of the last-named give us glimpses of their life there. He writes on 2nd December :

"Since your departure all and everything has been quiet here. Yesterday H.R.H.'s temper was much ruffled by the escape of all the Carabaugh prisoners or hostages taken in the last campaign. . . . I am going to walk with Mrs. McNeill, with whom we gents had a very pleasant tea-drinking yesterday."

"*December 11th.*

"Do not omit the obtainment of a greyhound to perpetuate our breed. Your dog cannot be depended upon, as he always cuts his forelegs ; however, I never yet had a blank day. . . . Mrs. McNeill will give you the household report. The teeth-cutting of Hessie of late has prevented our excursions."

"*December 26th.*

"Last night we had a grand dinner at Mrs. Macdonald's. We drank 'absent friends'—that is to say, Mrs. McNeill and I, for I scarcely think others' thoughts much diverge from selves. . . . They say that Paskovitch and General Yermoloff are disunited, and thwart each other. . . . Your books have arrived, and are *magnifique ;* I have begged Mrs. McNeill to put by Fraser's* until you come. I am writing in your drawing-room, having come to inquire the effects of Christmas dinner, and to inspect books. Your clothes are reported beautiful."

Both husband and wife found the constant separations most trying ; the uncertainty of Mr. McNeill's movements, the journeys to and fro he was called upon to make with the Envoy, and the indefinite prospect altogether, induced them to apply for the post of British Resident at Bushire, which Major Stannus, an old Indian friend and a constant correspondent in the most illegible of hand-

* Author of "Travels in Kurdistan."

writings, was about to resign on the ground of ill-health. In applying for this purely political appointment, and one which had not hitherto been given to a medical man, John McNeill required to make use of all the influence his more powerful friends could give him. He therefore forwarded copies of Mr. Willock's letters already quoted, and the following recommendations as well :

Translation of a Letter from H.M. the Shah to the Hon. Mountstuart Elphinstone, Governor of Bombay.

(After compliments.)

" Dr. McNeill, who has been many years resident in Persia, is well known amongst the nobles of this Court for his superior professional skill, from which we also have derived great benefit. Other duties of a very important nature have recently been entrusted to him, which he has fulfilled greatly to our satisfaction, and thus ensured to himself an augmentation of our kindness and favour.

" Since the friendship existing between our States has united them as one our servants also have become the same, and we feel ensured that the services rendered to us here will be taken into favourable consideration by Your Excellency by promoting the views of your servant now employed under our auspices as far as it may lie in your power.

" Let the unity of the two kingdoms remain as heretofore, and Your Excellency's wishes be made known to us.

" Sealed by FUTTEH ALLEE SHAH."

From Colonel Macdonald to the Hon. Mountstuart Elphinstone.

" I gladly avail myself of the occasion to bring under the favourable notice of Your Honour in Council the zeal and ability of Mr. McNeill, whose attention and benevolence in the exercise of his professional duties have acquired to him the esteem and respect of the inhabitants

of this city, and from whom, in the absence of Mr. Willock and Captain Campbell, I have of late received the most unwearied and valuable assistance in the despatch of public business."

In his own letter Dr. McNeill puts forward his having "continued to take a lively interest in everything connected with the situation in the Gulf since he had served there under Sir William Grant Keir." The application is dated 17th December, 1826, but it seems probable it was not sent in for a considerable time, events in Persia requiring Dr. McNeill's continued presence there.

In December, 1826, Lieutenant-Colonel Macdonald received a Letter of Credit from His Britannic Majesty George IV. to the "Most High, Mighty, and Glorious Prince, the Emperor and King of Eraun and Torraun," thus placing the affairs of the British Government, as well as those of the East India Company, exclusively under his management. The Shah no longer made any objection to the British Envoy and his suite making their headquarters in Teheran. The house of the British Legation had fallen into serious disrepair, and Dr. McNeill, at the Envoy's request, drew up a report on its condition for the Indian Government, who allowed 2,000 tomâns for necessary repairs. Markham, in his "History of Persia," gives the following description :

"The house of the British Mission in Teheran is built in European style, with a broad flight of steps leading up to a Doric portico between two projecting wings. On the opposite side of the street is the garden belonging to the British Mission. Two double rows of cypresses form a double cross, with flower-beds and a number of fruit-trees on either side. The roses grow to a height of eight or ten feet. . . . The snowy mountains, Elburz, seen above and between the rows of cypresses, have a most beautiful effect. The Shah bestowed a village on the British and Russian Missions, near the foot of the Elburz, where they might encamp during the intense heat of summer, when

everyone leaves Teheran. The British Mission village, called Gulahek, is about seven miles north of Teheran, and 3,800 feet above the level of the sea. The Russians encamp in another village about half a mile distant."

As we have reached the time when Colonel Macdonald's Mission was fully established, it is pleasant to be able to quote Sir Henry Rawlinson's opinion of the work accomplished between 1815 and 1826. On p. 39 of his book, "England and Russia in the East," he says :

"To the care, indeed, with which, after the retirement of Mr. Morier, Sir Henry Willock, ably assisted by Sir J. McNeill, then a young officer on the Bombay Medical Establishment, conciliated popular opinion, rather than to the wayward prodigality of Malcolm or the lawyer-like dexterity of Jones, must be attributed the impressions which, surviving all party questions—surviving even the shock of wounded pride—enable an Englishman at the present day (1875) in any part of Persia, not merely to enjoy personal safety, but to command esteem and respect."

CHAPTER VIII

PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

1827, 1828

THE year 1827 was a very disastrous one for Persia. Though at first repelled, the Russian armies were reinforced, and soon turned the tide of war. About July, a year after the war commenced, there was some hope that conditions of peace might be considered. The efforts of the British officers were all the time repeatedly exerted to bring it about, but there seems to have been no opportunity of opening authoritative negotiations with either party on behalf of the other, so nothing was done. By the month of October the Shah began to realize that the feeble resistance he was able to make was quite insufficient to save his country, and he gave Abbas Mirza instructions to conclude peace on any terms. An earnest request was made to Colonel Macdonald to assist in these negotiations. At the same time the Shah proposed sending Mirza Abdul Hassan Khan on a Mission to St. Petersburg by the route of Constantinople, Vienna, Paris, and London, to all of which Courts he would be accredited. Fetteh Ali Shah sent for John McNeill on 15th October to ask his advice about this. McNeill approved, but the project was not then carried out, probably because the Shah's attention was soon entirely taken up with his troubles in his own country. The desperate condition of affairs is well described in the following letter from Colonel Macdonald, at Tabreez, to Dr. McNeill, at Teheran, dated November 3rd :

" I enclose you various letters from myself and the Kaim Makaum to the Ministers of the King, as also a copy

of the Ultimatum of Russia submitted by M. Obrescoff to the Prince. As I feel assured that neither the Mootimed nor Meerza Abdool Hassan Khan will have the courage to communicate to their Royal Master the real and desperate complexion of affairs in this part of his dominions, I have to request that you will, on the receipt of this letter, solicit an immediate personal audience of His Majesty, and, when granted, neglect not to lay before his eyes in language adequate to the urgency of the moment the sudden and melancholy turn which the campaign has taken in this province. Erivan has fallen ; Tabreez has surrendered without resistance ; the Prime Minister is a captive ; the Prince is without an army ; and the whole of the Azerbijan has revolted to the enemy, who daily receive deputations and proffers of allegiance from every chief and every district.

" Nothing, in my opinion, short of an immediate cessation of hostilities can save His Majesty's throne or kingdom from revolution, from anarchy and bloodshed. The demands of Russia are exorbitant, but may, I think, be modified pending the present conference of the Prince and General-in-Chief. At all events, Persia has now no alternative, save a promise to accede to the conditions yet within her acceptance, and if you can prevail on the King to send up forthwith with Meerza Abdool Hassan Khan seven or eight crores of tomauns, the business will, I have just reason to believe, be arranged the moment of their arrival. Until the first instalment be paid no peace can be signed or sealed. The great object in view is to get rid of the Russians before they become so shackled with their engagements with the chiefs of tribes as to render it difficult for them to evacuate the province without a compromise of national character. I am now using my best endeavours to bring Abbas Meerza, who has taken fright at the troops sent to do him honour, to the place of conference, which he promised to attend, and where, if he fail to make his appearance on the day appointed, all confidence will be lost in him, and hostilities recommence

by the advance of the Russian troops into Irak, which they can enter without encountering the smallest opposition.

"To conclude, I must repeat my conviction that no treaty will be made till five crores are paid down. If the King, on the other hand, can be induced to send up seven or eight crores, it will, I am assured, prove a saving to him in the end by enabling the Prince to purchase on more reasonable terms the timely evacuation of his dominions."

On 19th November Abbas Mirza and General Paskevitch met at Deheraghon, and terms were drafted; but the Russian General declined to conclude them till five crores of tomâns were actually paid, the whole demand having been for fifteen crores, though subsequently, owing to the good offices of Colonel Macdonald, reduced to ten.

To the avaricious Fetteh Ali Shah this demand was more painful than any that could have been made, and it became Dr. McNeill's task to endeavour to extract from him part of the millions he was possessed of.

Weeks of most trying interviews took place, both with the Shah and with his advisers, and a constant correspondence was kept up between Colonel Macdonald, who had gone to Deheraghon, and Mr. McNeill at Teheran. All these letters and the diaries of both men have been kept, but are much too long to quote here. A diary of one day—and that by no means an exceptional one—is given as a sample of the arduous nature of the work:

Extract from Journal of 30th November, 1827.

"Early this morning I received a message from Meerza Abdul Wahab requesting that I would come to him. I attended His Excellency at his house, and found with him Nuzr Allee Khan Afshar, who had just arrived with despatches from Tabreez, and who delivered to me a letter

from Colonel Macdonald, enclosing an *Ureezeh* for the Shah, and letters to Their Excellencies Meerza Abdul Wahab and Meerza Abdul Hassan Khan. It appeared from the letters of which Nuzr Allee Khan was the bearer that H.R.H. Abbas Meerza had concluded a treaty with General Paskevitch, by which Persia was bound to pay ten crores of tomâns to Russia : that an arrangement had been entered into by which it was proposed that the sum of five crores should be paid by H.M. the Shah into my hands, for which I was to grant a receipt : that on the production of my receipt, Colonel Macdonald was to guarantee the payment of this sum of money, and the Russians were to evacuate Azerbijan. I communicated to H.E. the Moatamid ud Dowleh Colonel Macdonald's belief that matters might be arranged on the payment of seven or eight crores if it was paid immediately. His Excellency lamented the want of spirit in the nation ; said that with a slight effort the Russians might be driven from Azerbijan now, when their troops were dispersed in small detachments in different parts of the province. His Excellency went on to state that the Kayim Makam had some days ago written to beg that three crores might be paid immediately, and holding out hopes that, on the payment of this sum, with what the Prince Royal could add to it, peace might be concluded ; that he would therefore propose to pay into my hands three crores of tomâns.

" I replied that I had directions to receive five crores if the King would pay it to me, but that I would decline receiving three crores, as it would be incurring responsibility for no good purpose ; for Colonel Macdonald had distinctly stated that the payment of five crores was necessary to complete the arrangement. I then proceeded to the house of His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs, to whom I communicated the intelligence which had been received, and delivered Colonel M.'s letter. Meerza Mohammed Allee read in His Excellency's presence the *Ureezeh* for the Shah, and

H.E. stated his apprehension that the terms in which it was conceived would induce H.M. to suppose that no reduction had been effected of the original demand of fifteen crores, and that the five crores which it was demanded should be paid to me were required to serve as a pledge for the payment of any further sums which might be demanded; that, having paid this sum, H.M. might fear that he might be forced to pay the whole fifteen, which it was not now in his power to do. H.E. therefore thought that the *Ureezeh* had better be suppressed, but I did not consider myself at liberty to do so, and therefore declared my determination to lay it at the feet of H.M. But I thought it advisable to make a translation into Persian of Colonel M.'s letter to me, to be presented to H.M., that he might be permitted to entertain a hope of seeing peace concluded on the payment of a sum which he had in his power to disburse. When this had been done, I accompanied the Khan to the Dur i Khoneh, and was shortly after summoned to the presence of the Shah.

" I found H.M. by no means so well disposed to pay the sum which I proposed to receive as I had reason to believe him to be a few days before. H.M. appeared to be out of humour, put few questions, and had altogether the air of a person who was fortifying his resolution to reject some demand. After perusing the letters, H.M. stated that he had come to a final determination: That he would order forthwith to be put into my hands a bill for three crores of tomâns, and that he would engage to pay two crores more in six months' time, but that beyond this he would not pay one tomân; that even this sum would only be paid on condition that the Arras should be the boundary, that the Russian troops should immediately evacuate Azerbijan, and that the stipulations of the Treaty of Goolistan, with the exception of what referred to the line of frontier, should be resumed in the new Treaty; that, whatever might be the consequence, he would not and could not do more than this. After

directing me to intimate to Colonel Macdonald what had been said, H.M. gave directions for the despatch of Nuzr Ali Khan to-morrow morning. I attempted to remonstrate, but H.M. spoke so decidedly that I thought it would be of no use to argue the point then, more particularly as the Moatamid declared to H.M. that the Russians might easily be driven from Azerbijan ; that the Russian General ought to be thankful to obtain five crores on any terms ; that it was unnecessary for the Shah to say that he *could* give no more—it was quite enough to say that he *would* give no more—with much to the same effect. I therefore remained silent. When I was permitted to depart, I proceeded (without holding any further communication with the Ministers) to the apartments of Manoochehr Khan, where I met several men of rank attached to the Court. The subject of H.M.'s communication to me was known, and the result of the conference was the subject of anxious inquiry. My answers having led to a belief that I was dissatisfied with what had occurred, I was urged to state the cause. I complained that H.M. a few days before had given me every reason to conclude that he would pay as much as seven crores of tomâns if peace could be obtained on reasonable terms in other respects ; that when a man from the Ausuf ud Dowleh had announced that peace had actually been concluded on the payment of five crores, he received a present for bringing good news, and that now when there was a prospect of concluding peace on favourable terms, H.M. chose to recede. The courtiers defended His Majesty, urging the largeness of the sum offered. The superior advantage of paying the money to his own people, who, if they were well paid, would soon drive the Russians out of Tabreez, and the degradation of giving money to procure peace, were warmly urged, and led to much discussion. The Ministers continued to resist all attempts to increase the sum, after H.M. had so decidedly expressed his determination. I in vain pointed out the hopelessness of attempting any arrangement on the terms which were

proposed, and concluded by insisting that I would not receive the bill for three crores. This gave rise to fresh discussions, which were carried on with great warmth. At length I declared that it was impossible to hold any terms with the Government or place any reliance on its good faith; that I conceived the Persian Government had broken faith with me; that when Mahommed Ali Khan was despatched, I had been induced, on the faith of assurance given by the Ministers, to write to Colonel Macdonald stating the Shah's readiness to pay five crores of tomâns immediately; that the Colonel, relying on these assurances, had probably given similar assurances to General Paskovitch; that if Nuzr Ali Khan should be permitted to depart with the orders which H.M. had to-day issued, the Envoy might be placed in an embarrassing situation, and I should be considered as consenting to the breach of faith of which the Government was guilty; that if H.M. insisted on adhering to the resolution he had expressed in the morning, I should take no further part in proceedings, and I hoped Colonel Macdonald would adopt a similar resolution; that if the Envoy's endeavours to accommodate matters were to be met in this manner, if, after inducing the Russians to reduce their demands, he should find the Shah receding from what he had previously agreed to, it could not be expected that he would take any further interest in the proceedings. I then took an opportunity to speak with Manoochehr Khan in private, and to represent to him the state of the case. I did not conceal from him that I attributed the Shah's determination to the advice of Mirza Abdul Wahab, and concluded by stating that, if the war should be renewed and the Government overturned, I should attribute all the evil to the injurious counsels of the Moatamid. After having made this communication, I took my leave, with little hope that any favourable change would be effected.

"I have been much irritated and exhausted by the length and warmth of the discussions, and, when I returned home, was forced to lay myself down to rest. I

had not been long at home, however, when I received a note from Manoochehr Khan, and another from the Moatamid, complaining that I had accused the Mirza unjustly of having obstructed the arrangement I had proposed, or influenced H.M. to resist the payment of five crores, and stating that the sum of three crores had been named by H.M. in consequence of what had been stated in the Kayim Makam's note, and finally that he was as well convinced as I could be of the advantage of concluding a peace as soon as possible.

" Manoochehr Khan begged that I would not attribute what had happened to the Moatamid, who was desirous to effect any arrangement that would meet my wishes.

" I replied to Manoochehr Khan that I was only desirous to save myself from being implicated in a breach of faith; that I had no personal feeling of resentment against the Moatamid; on the contrary, that, however our opinions might differ, I must always entertain a sincere regard for H.E.

" In the evening I was again summoned to attend the Shah, but before I could reach the Palace H.M. had retired. I proceeded to Manoochehr Khan's apartments, where I found the Moatamid. Some mutual explanations took place, and we were on as confidential terms as if nothing had occurred.

" H.E. then intimated to me that, in consequence of what I had stated, Manoochehr Khan had made a representation to the Shah, which had prepared H.M. to renew the discussion; that His Excellency had then seen His Majesty, and induced him to consent to the payment of five crores instead of three, but that two of the five crores would be paid in jewels and other valuable property; that H.M. was, however, distinct and decided in his declaration that he would not pay one *dinar* more than this sum, and even that only on the conditions before mentioned. I expressed my obligations to the Khan and H.E. for having effected this arrangement, and after some conversation on the details, it was agreed to

postpone their discussion till to-morrow. I have thus to congratulate myself on having got the Shah to change the three for five crores."

When at last five crores had been painfully extorted from the Shah, conditions were attached to the payment which Russia would not accept, and a difficulty arose as to where the money was to be kept, and how it was to be conveyed to the Russian Headquarters. Dr. McNeill was the only man in Teheran in whom both Persians and Russians had complete confidence, and he was several times requested, not only to receive the money nominally on behalf of Russia, but actually to store the bullion in his own house. This he refused to do, and it was arranged that the crores—three of which were in gold and two in silver—should be taken from the palace to the house of Manoochehr Khan, the Chief Eunuch, where Dr. McNeill should receive them on behalf of Russia.

Meanwhile, it had been decided at Deheraghon that M. Walkoffsky should be sent by General Paskovitch to Teheran to explain the terms of the treaty. As Dr. McNeill remarks, the Shah was "unwilling to trust any person with the charge of so large an amount of cash," and "one Russian would at this moment be a better protection than one hundred Persians."

Colonel Macdonald wrote that he had good reason to believe that if the Shah could be persuaded to produce at once three more crores in addition to the five already paid, Russia would at once evacuate the province of Azerbijan, and waive her claim for the rest of the money.

A further series of wearying discussions began, in the midst of which John McNeill was enabled to gain the confidence of the Shah even more than before, by his medical skill. He says, writing to Colonel Macdonald, 12th December, 1827: "I have for some days been harassed by almost unremitting attendance on Moochoolee Khan, son of the Taj ud Dowleh and a pet son of the Shah, who has been dangerously ill, but is now much better. For

several nights I was not allowed to rest : messengers were coming and going all night long, and for some days I had to wait upon him three or four times daily. He is now, however, out of danger—at least, I hope so. Had I not succeeded in restoring him, I could have been of no further use to you here."

Soon after this Hassan Ali Mirza, the third son of the Shah, who was the Governor of Khorassan, was sent for by his father, and McNeill remarked : " He will probably be guilty of some folly, and even derange all that has been done, unless matters are adjusted before his arrival. In the event of his coming before the Shah has agreed to the payment of the three crores, I think Colonel Macdonald should come to Teheran."

Fetteh Ali, perfectly determined not to disburse any more money, wrote to Abbas Mirza that he must himself find the three extra crores if they had to be paid, and he would send Mirza Abdul Hassan Khan, in his capacity of Minister for Foreign Affairs, to assist the Prince in bringing the negotiations to a speedy and successful issue. John McNeill urged that when he was sent, Abdul Hassan should be the bearer of the sixth, seventh, and eighth crores, as the best and only mode of assuring success to his Mission, but quite in vain. On 17th December McNeill wrote : " As matters now stand, I despair of being able to influence His Majesty to do what is right ; great pains are now taken to prevent my having access to him."

The next step in advance was that Mirza Abdul Hassan Khan was despatched with the five crores. Men were kept at work night and day packing the money, which took some 1,600 mules to carry it. It was counted into bags, and these bags were, again, put into sacks ; and on 27th December, to John McNeill's intense relief, the first detachment of the convoy started just in time for M. Walkoffsky to meet it one day's journey from Teheran, and before the news, that Hassan Ali Mirza with 10,000 Khorassan troops was approaching, could reach the Shah.

Dr. McNeill did all he could to make M. Walkoffsky's stay pleasant ; he was lodged in the house of Mirza Abdul Wahab, and supplied with tables, chairs, knives, forks, spoons, etc., and wine by McNeill. Mrs. McNeill, someone wrote, has " been busy making Italian cream, mince-pies, etc., to entertain the Capitaine des Gardes de Sa Majesté l'Empereur de Toutes les Russies." The terms of courtesy upon which the British and Russians were, throughout these months of discussion, are pleasant reading, and the entire confidence shown by the Russians in the British latterly—though at first General Paskovitch was inclined to be uncommunicative—is very gratifying. In one letter Macdonald writes : " No confidence is placed by the Russians in any letters from Teheran excepting those written by you."

Mr. McNeill now intended to withdraw from the discussions, as M. Walkoffsky was present to represent his own nation, but very few days elapsed before another change of front on the part of the Shah drew him into the midst of it again. After most of the money had actually started, accompanied by his own Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Shah suddenly announced that not one tomân should be paid till the Russians had evacuated Azerbijan, and gave orders that the money was to be stopped at Kasvin. The strength of mind shown by John McNeill at this juncture saved the situation. On 1st January he resolved to himself follow the money, and accompany it to Tabreez, there to hand it over to Colonel Macdonald to be paid to Russia. The Shah consented to this, because the money was to be in the keeping of the Envoy, and, in case of a renewal of hostilities, the British protection over the money would be respected.

Meanwhile, at Deheraghon, Colonel Macdonald was with difficulty preventing a renewal of hostilities, the armistice of one month having expired. He amusingly describes General Paskovitch " under one of those fits of passion which so frequently hold dominion over His Excellency's mind," and Abbas Mirza feigning high spirits, and talking

lightly about partridge and pheasant shooting to impose on those about him, but showing his despair " when we had retired to his sleeping apartments."

As was expected, the arrival of Hassan Ali Mirza at Teheran had the worst possible effect on the Shah. The fickle populace received him with acclamation ; " people of all classes threw themselves upon him, kissing the hem of his garment, and even the prints of his horse's feet." It was announced that he was to be nominated heir to the throne instead of Abbas Mirza. " The evening before H.R.H. arrived, a meeting of the Mullahs was held to arrange the manner in which the sacred banner of the Meshed was to be brought into the town, and it was carried by acclamation that he who should recommend the Shah to pay money to the Unbelievers should be announced as an enemy of the True Faith." Now, Abbas Mirza's succession had been guaranteed by Russia, and England had at all times taken care to cultivate his friendship as the future monarch. Also, if the money demanded was not paid to Russia, there was not likely to be any Persian throne for either son to inherit. " It was plain," McNeill writes, " that nothing but an extraordinary effort could save the Prince Royal." The effort he proposed making was that he should personally borrow the necessary sum from the Shah, and that Colonel Macdonald should induce Abbas Mirza to repay it. This was no small proposition for a young Scottish doctor to make alone in an Eastern capital, but it was to save the throne of Persia, and indirectly prevent encroachment on our Indian Empire. The Shah only consented to lend one crore, and for this, the sixth crore, McNeill signed a bond, which was also signed by the Kaim Makam.

At Deheraghon the threatened crisis came about. As Mirza Abdul Hassan Khan (nicknamed " Fatty " by the young British officers), who had pursued his way, though the money was detained at Casveen (Kasvin), approached Deheraghon, Colonel Macdonald rode out to meet him. Both men dismounted, and, seating themselves " on a

hillock of stone which chanced to be free from snow," had a long conversation. But " Fatty " " seemed more engrossed with the idea of the personal indignities he had suffered at Tabreez than with the expediency of exerting his endeavours to save his country and his Sovereign from the danger with which they were menaced." Next day the news arrived of the detention of the money at Casveen, if, rumour said, it had ever gone there, the sacks possibly containing only copper, or even stones! The Russians broke up the Peace Conference, and issued orders for renewed hostilities.

On the very day the Conference at Deheraghon was broken up—the 18th January, 1828—John McNeill had started from Teheran to accompany the six crores from Casveen to Tabreez, and ten days later he and Colonel Macdonald met at the village of Turkomanchai. " We were this morning, while sitting at breakfast, agreeably surprised at the sudden and unexpected appearance of Mr. McNeill, who, with his face peeled and his eyes inflamed by the reflection from the snow, with which the country is everywhere sheeted, had come post from Casveen." The news of the rupture of negotiations had " flown from village to village with the velocity of lightning," and in great alarm the Prince of Casveen, who was not by nature a hero, pressed the departure of McNeill without an instant's delay. In passing through Meanna McNeill called on Baron Rosen, the General commanding the division, who, " frantic with joy, leapt from the couch on which he was reposing, and, in his overeagerness to embrace the bearer of tidings so agreeable, overturned a jar of clotted cream, and ruined for ever a beautiful carpet just purchased for the Baroness!"

This news had the effect of stopping the renewed hostilities, and shortly it was arranged that a further conference should be held at Turkomanchai. McNeill returned to Teheran, trying to work further on the feelings or fears of the King. His wife describes his return in a letter thus : " It would be difficult for anyone to form an idea

of the extent of privation he endured during the negotiations, which often filled me with fears that his bodily strength—great as it is—would have sunk. When he returned to Teheran after having been present at the signing of the Treaty of Peace, so general in the capital was the belief that to his exertions was it owing, that hundreds of people went out to meet him, and hailed him and followed him as the deliverer of their country to the very gates of the British Palace."

Macdonald joined the Peace Plenipotentiaries, who were: General Paskovitch, M. D'Obrescoff, the Crown Prince Abbas Mirza, the Persian Prime Minister (who had been a prisoner in the hands of Russia, but was liberated to take part), the Minister of Foreign Affairs (*i.e.*, "Fatty"), the Kaim Makam (Viceroy), and Manoocher Khan (Chief Eunuch). On the 23rd February the Peace Treaty of Turkomanchai was signed. The sacrifices made by Persia, which included the cession of the provinces of Erivan and Nukhchivan, as well as the payment of ten crores (about £2,000,000) in gold and silver,* were immense, but she was helpless, and she saved her throne and regained the province of Azerbijan. Some histories blame the action of the British in urging Persia to accept such terms, but no reader of these private papers of the two Scotsmen chiefly responsible could doubt that they acted in the best interests of Persia under the circumstances of the time. On 29th February John McNeill wrote to John Macdonald: "It is most gratifying to see and to feel how high we stand at this Court at a moment when the course pursued by our Government ought, on every reasonable calculation, to have left us without influence and almost without character."

The last part of this sentence refers to the action of the British Foreign Office under Mr. Canning, which forms a distressing chapter in the history of our relations with Persia, and which will be dealt with later.

* "Progress and Present Position of Russia in the East," p. 102.

CHAPTER IX

THE ABROGATION OF TREATY CLAUSES

1827, 1828 (*continued*)

THE treaty was signed, but the trouble about the money was by no means over. Four of the ten crores stipulated had still to be arranged for; one payment had to be made before the troops were withdrawn from Azerbijan, another in two months, and a third in January, 1830.

One of the first acts of the ungrateful Mirza Abdul Hassan Khan and Manoocher Khan was to endeavour to make the British Government, through the Envoy, responsible for the money for which Dr. McNeill had given his personal bond. This unworthy proceeding was frustrated by Colonel Macdonald's vigorous repudiation and prompt action. He went straight to the Prince, and received a promise that Dr. McNeill's bonds should be returned to him, the Prince giving a formal acquittance under his official seal for the money.

Colonel Macdonald persuaded General Paskovitch to undertake to evacuate Azerbijan immediately on the payment of one half-crore in addition to the six crores he had already received. How was this sum—250,000 tomâns—to be raised? The Shah could not, or would not, produce it, and it was impossible for Abbas Mirza to do so while his own rich province was occupied by the Russians.

By the Treaty of Teheran England promised Persia 200,000 tomâns annually if she were invaded. To the shame of the British Government, it has to be acknowledged that they disowned their solemn undertaking upon the slender excuse that Abbas Mirza had begun the actual hostilities while the Russian Plenipotentiary was still at

the Persian Court; but, while disowning the obligation, they instructed their representative to endeavour to get the clauses of the treaty referring to it annulled. From the Persian point of view, England now owed them 400,000 tomâns, the war having lasted two years. To Colonel Macdonald fell the painful task of refusing this just claim, and of making conditions before any money at all was given them. On 26th February, on his own responsibility, he promised that 250,000 (subsequently altered to 200,000) tomâns should be paid by England to Persia if the latter consented to the articles of the Treaty of Teheran which referred to this undertaking being expunged from that document. The Crown Prince, eager to return to Tabreez at any price, gave his assent in a written obligation bearing His Highness's seal and the seal of Kaim Makam, to abrogate the clauses obnoxious to England for 200,000 tomâns, and Colonel Macdonald immediately arranged for bills for the money on London, without waiting for the Shah's consent. To complete the half-crore, Colonel Macdonald raised the necessary 50,000 by accepting a personal bond from Abbas Mirza, payable in two months. Thus the evacuation was purchased. Colonel Macdonald left Turkomanchai on 29th February for Tabreez, and the Russian troops began to withdraw. On 20th March, 1828, General Paskovitch and the last column of the Russian troops quitted Tabreez by one road, while Abbas Mirza made his public entry by another. H.R.H. was received by the inhabitants with demonstrations of the greatest enthusiasm, though these very men had, only four months before, thrown open the gates of their city and welcomed the approach of the Russian Prince Aristoff.

In the first flush of satisfaction over the conclusion of peace, the Shah parted with another crore to Russia, fairly easily, but he strongly objected to annulling the articles of the Treaty of Teheran referring to payments by England. Dr. McNeill, though loyally endeavouring to carry out the wishes of his Government, could not but feel that justice, for once, was on the side of the Persian King.

It is true that the Shah had been warned before the war to expect no pecuniary aid from England, but, he argued, now the war was over, there was nothing to prevent England assisting him. John McNeill brought to his remembrance that he had repeatedly said " the obligations he owed to the British Envoy for his exertions in bringing about an arrangement with Russia would sufficiently exculpate the British Government "—that, " as His Majesty had during the last two years granted a full authority to Abbas Mirza in all matters connected with the foreign policy of the empire, etc., it was impossible for Colonel Macdonald to imagine that in a matter of comparatively minor importance H.M. would totally disregard an official bond granted by the Prince." He brought to bear every argument he could, and used all his personal influence with the Shah and the Ministers, to get the alteration in the treaty ratified. For a long time these efforts were in vain, the real difficulty being that H.M. was mortified to find that the money was not to be in his own hands, but was to go to Russia as part of the war indemnity, for which he held the Prince responsible.

In view of the remarks on pp.43, 44 of Sir Henry Rawlinson's "England and Russia in the East," which the liberty is taken of quoting, bringing an accusation of unfair dealing against Colonel (Sir John) Macdonald, it is necessary here to detail the transactions which Sir Henry allows he was " not cognisant of." The documents from which this memoir is compiled are the private papers of the Macdonald and McNeill families, and no one reading them would have been led into the serious error of suggesting that dates had been altered or suppressed for the purpose of concealment.

Sir H. Rawlinson says : " We were not cognisant of the full details of the transaction which ensued,* but we

* Footnote, p. 43, by Sir H. Rawlinson :

" There is a singular, and, to say the least of it, a most suspicious want of uniformity in the dating of the documents which refer to this transaction in the published ' Treaties ' (' Indian Papers,' No. 2, p. 7). In one paper the English date is used ; in another the Mahomedan ; and the date of the third is altogether wanting."

believe that Sir John Macdonald, in the first instance, passed a bond to the Prince Royal, pledging himself to furnish a sum of 250,000 tomâns towards the liquidation of the indemnity, provided H.R.H., acting as Plenipotentiary of the Shah, would annul the subsidy engagements of the Treaty of Teheran ; and that subsequently, when the time for payment arrived, the Envoy declared that he had exceeded his instructions, and that he could only disburse at the moment 200,000 tomâns, in consideration of which assistance a formal act of surrender must be passed to him, but that he would obtain the remaining 50,000 tomâns in the sequel as a gratuity to Persia from the British Crown. Be this, however, as it may, the Bond for 250,000 tomâns remains in the hands of the Prince Royal ; the act of annulment was passed as ratified on the payment of the reduced sum of 200,000 tomâns ; and when Persia claimed the difference, she was told that ' she could not establish a right to the greater sum, as she had subsequently agreed to accept, and acknowledged that she had accepted, the less sum as the price of the sacrifice she made.'

" Now, if nothing positively dishonest can be imputed to us in these proceedings, they must be admitted, at any rate, to involve as close a practice as was ever followed by a civilized nation. . . . With regard to the discrepancy also between the amount tendered in Sir John Macdonald's bond and the sum actually paid, we suspect that Persia has still a valid claim against us for 50,000 tomâns."

To make clear the details of what actually occurred, I quote from various manuscript papers :

Private Letter, dated " Teheran, 28th October, 1827," from John McNeill to his Father.

" He [*i.e.*, Colonel Macdonald] is at present placed in circumstances of peculiar delicacy and difficulty in the discharge of his public functions. He has not received one word of reply to his numerous references to the

Government at home, and he is left to work his way amidst the conflicting interests of all the parties concerned, without one syllable of advice or instruction from his superiors. Every step he takes is therefore on his personal responsibility—you may say at his particular peril—for he cannot know the views of the authorities who have never communicated with him, as no individual is ever supported by his Government if it is more convenient to abandon him and to take shelter under a disavowal of his proceedings. It is cruel to leave a public servant in such a situation, but there is no appeal."

Private Letter from John Macdonald to John McNeill, dated "Turkomanchai, 26th February, 1828."

"If the Russians agree to evacuate the province . . . I shall, on my own responsibility, become security to General Paskovitch for the sum of 250,000, on condition that H.R.H. consents to expunge the two obnoxious articles from our Treaty."

Public Letter from J. Macdonald to J. McNeill, dated "Turkomanchai, 26th February, 1828." Sent by the hand of Mirza Mohammed Ali Khan.

"SIR,

"The Russian Plenipotentiaries having, since your departure and after much discussion, consented to evacuate this province, with a reservation of Khoe, for 6½ crores of tomâns, provided that sum be paid to them in a short space of time, I have to desire that you will, on receipt of this letter, personally intimate to His Persian Majesty my readiness to furnish two hundred and fifty thousand tomâns of this sum on the following conditions—namely: That the Third and Fourth Articles of the last definitive Treaty concluded by Messrs. Morier and Ellis between the British Government and the Court of Teheran be immediately expunged from that document, and that the stipulations contained in those articles be

henceforward considered as annulled and abrogated for ever.

" Should His Majesty the Shah be willing to accede to these terms, and express to me in a royal Firman, couched in language so distinct as to admit of no misapprehension, his readiness to agree to them, I shall hold myself bound, on the receipt of the said Firman, to pay into the hands of H.R.H. Abbas Meerza, or into those of the Russian Plenipotentiaries, as it may please the King to direct, the sum of half a crore of tomâns on the part of the Government I represent.

" I shall await your reply with some impatience, as the evacuation of Azerbijan by the troops of His Imperial Majesty may depend on the determination of the Shah."

From J. Macdonald to J. McNeill, dated March 7th, and no doubt sent by a fast riding messenger, as it seems to have arrived very soon after the letters sent on 27th February.

" With reference to my public letters from Turkomanchai, under date 26th and 27th ultimo, I hasten to apprise you that I have this day received despatches from the Supreme Government which interdict me for paying a larger sum for the redemption of our engagements with this Court than 200,000 tomâns. It is therefore no longer in my power to add to this sum the additional 50,000 (fifty thousand) which before the receipt of this despatch I had authorized you to offer as the price of the abrogation of the third and fourth articles of our definitive Treaty.

" As this may make some alteration in the sentiments of the King, and render it necessary to make other arrangements for the liquidation of the remaining half-crore required to secure the evacuation of the province by the Russian troops, I lose not a moment in despatching a Goolaun with the intelligence. Should, however, His Majesty agree to receive two hundred thousand, I am still prepared immediately to disburse that sum."

From J. McNeill to J. Macdonald.

"TEHERAN,
"*9th March.*

"General Rosen departed this morning, and I took occasion immediately afterwards to speak tothe Moatamid and to Mirza Abdul Hassan Khan regarding the abrogation of the Articles in the Treaty. . . . M. A. H. Khan seemed to think that there will be no great difficulty in carrying the point, though no doubt it would have been easier had the 200,000 tomâns been payable to the Shah. . . . I omitted to mention that I *did not deliver* the Ureezeh and letter to the Moatamid which Mirza Mohammed Ali delivered to me. Finding that your determination to change the 250,000 for 200,000 had been adopted in consequence of letters received after the Khan's departure from Turkomanchai, and concluding that the sum mentioned in the Ureezeh was 250,000, I thought it best to open it, and finding this to be the case, I suppressed it."

From J. Macdonald to J. McNeill.

"*13th March.*

"I have recently received a letter from the Supreme Government on the subject of the Mission accounts, which has caused me the greatest mortification and annoyance. The present given to the King is the only item of my disbursements of which they have approved. It was this letter which frightened me from my original resolution of agreeing to the payment of the additional 50,000 tomâns."

From J. Macdonald's Diary, written at Tabreez.

"*16th March.*—I this day received from Abbas Meerza a written obligation bearing His Majesty's seal, as also that of the Kaim Makam, signifying their assent to the arrangement proposed by me respecting the abrogation of the Third and Fourth Articles of our definitive Treaty, and in return sent him a Bill of Exchange on the Court of Directors for the sum of 200,000 tomâns at the exchange

of four silver roubles to the tomân, according to the terms of the Treaty of Turkomanchai. . . . To obviate, however, the risk of any future misunderstanding on the subject of this agreement, I deemed it prudent to address a letter, of which the annexed is a faithful copy, to the Prince, while I at the same time enjoined Mr. Cormick, who is now with His Highness at Seriscund, to acquaint H.H. that he must trust entirely to the generosity of the British Government for any future compensation, *which in case of refusal he has no right to demand*. . . . . Respecting the discussions which occurred between us for the payment of a larger sum than 200,000 (two hundred thousand) tomâns, I made known my sentiments through the medium of Mirza Ali Nukee. I now beg leave to repeat that previously to the conferences on the point, I reported to my Government the wishes of Your Highness, and expect an early answer to my communication ; should any addition be made to the above sum it will hereafter be paid to you.

" ' I have frequently represented that I can in no way be responsible for an amount more considerable than 200,000 (two hundred thousand) tomâns, nor is it possible for me to enter into engagements of such tendency.

" ' Your Royal Highness must be aware that my duty obliges me to report all discussions of a public nature to my superiors, and this I have done in the most explicit manner.' "

From J. McNeill to J. Macdonald.

" TEHERAN,
" *12th March.*

" Mirza A. H. Khan, accompanied by General Rosen, entered the town this afternoon. The Khan was well received by the Shah, and took occasion to mention your proposition regarding the change in the Treaty *in its modified form*, which I had enabled him to do by mentioning the contents of your letters of to-day on the road before he entered the town."

From J. Macdonald, at Tabreez, to J. McNeill, at Teheran.

" 16th April.

" Your letters of the 25th and 26th ultimo reached me yesterday. Their contents are no less gratifying to me than interesting ; and I am at a loss to find terms adequate to convey to you the high sense I entertain of your ability and discretion. You did well to open and withhold the delivery of the *Urcezeh* of the Shah, which might otherwise have retarded the completion of the arrangement for the abrogation of the obnoxious Articles."

From J. Macdonald, at Tabreez, to J. McNeill, at Teheran.

" 23rd April.

" I have strongly recommended that the amount of the equivalent for the annulment of our obligations should be increased. This suggestion may perhaps be attended to. If so, the balance will hereafter be brought to the credit of Persia. At present I can give no pledge, and if the Shah refuses to fulfil the engagements entered into by his son, I shall abstain from all further discussions on the subject."

From J. Macdonald to J. McNeill.

" 29th March.

" I have the honour herewith to enclose you a copy of a Bond, delivered to me by His Royal Highness Abbas Mirza, by which he, in virtue of the full powers vested in him by the Shah on all matters touching the foreign relations of Persia, engages that, on condition of my consenting to advance the sum of 200,000 (two hundred thousand) tomâns, to procure the evacuation of this province . . . to abrogate for ever the third and fourth Articles of our last definitive Treaty with this Court.

" Penetrated with the inestimable importance, not only to Persia but to us, of securing the early evacuation of Tabreez, Maragha, Germacood, etc., I, after some dis-

cussion with H.R.H., agreed to grant him a Bill of Exchange on the Honourable the Court of Directors for the sum above specified, payable in four months, with a proviso that the sanction of the King should be obtained as soon as practicable.

"The Bill was regularly endorsed and transferred by H.R.H. to General Paskovitch, who, in consequence, withdrew his troops from Tabreez and the other towns on the 21st instant.

"I have therefore to request that you will solicit a personal audience with His Persian Majesty, and explain to him that unless his ratification of the stipulations entered into by his son be forthwith granted, it will be incumbent on me to stop the acceptation and payment of the draft in question. I beg that you will favour me with an immediate and decisive answer to this despatch."

J. McNeill to J. Macdonald.

"TEHERAN,
"*20th May.*

"I was this morning asked by Mirza Abdul Wahab and Mirza A. H. Khan whether I was authorized to say that the British Government would give more than 200,000 tomâns to obtain the abrogation of the obnoxious Articles in the Treaty. I replied that I was not only not authorized to offer anything more, but I was positively directed to inform Their Excellencies, as I had repeatedly done, that the Government has restricted the compensation to that sum, and that as the Prince Royal has given his Bond in the knowledge of this fact and H.R.H.'s acquiescence in the measure had been communicated to Government, it did not become this Government to rest its objections on the amount of the compensation."

Note (*a*) that the offer of 250,000 depended on the Shah's immediate consent;

(*b*) That the Shah never received the offer of 250,000

at all, John McNeill having heard of the alteration in time to prevent his presenting Macdonald's letter of 26th February ;

(*c*) That there were only ten days between the offer and its reduction ;

(*d*) That the Prince was fully aware of the change when he gave his bond on 16th March ;

(*e*) That there was no concealing of dates.

Colonel Macdonald's feeling on the subject is indicated in the following letter to McNeill, dated 3rd May :

" I should be a dolt and an idiot to expect gratitude in a Court so weak and venal as that of Persia, and good feeling only exists when I have been the means of promoting the selfish views of those who profess it. A benefit rendered to the State is unworthy of a thought.

" With respect of their bringing up the old story of a change of relations, or rather in the mode of conducting them, I despise their empty menaces and I disdain to enter into their miserable intrigues. Let them pursue what course they think proper. In God's name let them please themselves. I am callous to what measure they adopt. If the Shah be base enough to proclaim to the world the disgrace of his son and the heir-apparent of his throne by refusing to ratify a most solemn engagement which procured the evacuation of his country, the deed will add as little to his renown as to his interest. It is, to say the least of it, a most unprincely procedure."

It was not until 24th August, 1828 (14th of the month Saffer, A.H. 1244) that the Shah and the Prince Royal formally ratified the agreement, and Articles 3 and 4 of the Anglo-Persian Treaty of 1814 were finally expunged.

Some years afterwards, in a memorandum on the subject, Dr. McNeill wrote :

" There can be no doubt that the change thus effected in the Treaty, coupled with the circumstances under which it was effected, gave a shock to the influence of

England in Persia which it has never recovered, diminished the confidence in the high moral feeling of the British Cabinet. The Shah, on affixing his seal to the ratification, observed, 'I now understand you.' . . . Since that time scarcely an interview has taken place between the British Envoy and the Persian Ministers in which the mutilation of the Treaty has not been a subject of comment and even reproach."

What Sir John Malcolm thought of Colonel Macdonald's conduct can be seen from the following quotation, and though John McNeill is not named in it, there is no doubt that every word could be applied to his share in the negotiations with equal justice.

Extract from Minute dated Dhapoorie, India, September, 1828.

"Lieutenant-Colonel Macdonald had no doubt nothing to desire but that the parties engaged should consult their own interests, but those alone who have had to negotiate with Asiatic States or to deal with generals flushed with conquest can tell the difficulty of making men listen to calm reason or attend to their own interests at a period when the operations of war are in progress, and when the passions of jealousy, hatred, and revenge are in full excitement. From my experience of such scenes and of human nature, I must conclude that nothing short of that manly openness, that clear and consistent adherence to the principles laid down for his own guidance, and the energetic earnestness that stamped every effort could have given the British Envoy that power and influence which enabled him to be the mediator of the late Treaty between Russia and Persia. And this most desirable object, it must be always recollected, he succeeded in effecting without embarrassing his Government by one pledge or departing in a single instance from the line of policy he was directed to pursue.

"Lieutenant-Colonel Macdonald took advantage of the

favourable circumstances of the moment; he advanced two hundred thousand tomâns to Abbas Meerza to meet the double object of accelerating the evacuation of Persia by the Russian Army and of promoting the wishes of the secret committee of the Honourable the Court of Directors, who justly deemed it of political importance to emancipate by this payment the British Government from the embarrassing stipulations of the third and fourth Articles of the treaty of alliance concluded by Messrs. Ellis and Morier.

"Had Lieutenant-Colonel Macdonald failed in his efforts to arrest the advance of the Russians on Teheran, there can exist no doubt but almost all the southern provinces of Persia would have fallen from their allegiance. Under such a state of affairs Russian troops and Russian Agency would have been spread over Irak and Fars to the shores of the Gulf and to the province of Khorassan. This must have been an inevitable result, and one beyond the power of the Russian Government to control, and it may be safely asserted that, however unsettled that Empire's power over Persia might have been, the sensation produced by the mere fact of its advance would have been early ruinous to all our plans of economy and retrenchment."

Lieutenant-Colonel Macdonald received the honour of knighthood in reward for his services to his own country, as well as presents bestowed upon him by the Czar and the Shah, his suite also being rewarded.

It is not necessary to follow further the subject of the war indemnity to Russia, but before leaving it we must mention the personal rewards which fell to Dr. McNeill. These in some measure made up for the "fatigue of body and waste of lungs" he had endured, and the jealousy and suspicion he suffered from the Persian courtiers. The Czar wished to confer upon him the Cross of the Second Class of the Order of St. Anne, which, however, he was not allowed to accept, and presented him with a

gold snuffbox set with diamonds, worth £1,500. The Shah wished to confer the First Class of the Order of the Lion and the Sun, but objection was made by the Envoy to anyone of Dr. McNeill's rank receiving so high an Order, so the Shah signified his intention of giving " a portrait of himself set in diamonds, with a collar of gold and jewels by which to suspend it." Numerous commendatory letters, official and private, reached him, some extracts of which are now given :

Extract of Letter addressed by Colonel Macdonald to Dr. McNeill, dated Dekhurgaum, 12th December, 1827.

" I am unwell, and unable to write to you so fully as I could have wished ; but I should be wanting in duty and gratitude were I not to make an effort to thank you for the zeal and ability you have evinced in your indefatigable endeavours to awaken the Shah to a sense of the immensity of the danger with which he is threatened."

Extract from Letter from Colonel Macdonald to Dr. McNeill.

" DEKHURGAUM,
" *8th January*, 1828.

" Your letters of the 21st, 22nd, 25th, 26th, and 27th of December last have separately and together given me unfeigned satisfaction, removed the doubts and suspicions of General Paskovitch, and replaced the gloom which, until their arrival, saddened every countenance, by joy and hope, and a cheery prospect of soon witnessing a happy termination of the miserable state of uncertainty in which we have been held for the last fifty days.

" Had the Shah not been brought, through your unwearied exertions and ability, to make the sacrifice he has done, I do not scruple to affirm that he would in the course of a month or six weeks from this period have lost his throne, his remaining treasure, and perhaps his life.

" H.R.H. (Abbas Meerza) most fully and sincerely appreciates the value of your late services, and has

desired me to convey to you in the strongest language the high sense he entertains of your unceasing efforts, at an exigency one of the greatest that can happen to a State and at a moment pregnant with utmost danger to his personal interests. It affords me, sir, I assure you, infinite pleasure to be made the channel of transmitting to you these flattering testimonials of H.R.H.'s gratitude."

Extract of Letter from Mr. Secretary Stirling to Colonel Macdonald, dated Fort William, 27th June, 1828.

"It is due to Dr. McNeill to state that he appears to have executed the difficult and important duty confided to him by your instructions with great address and ability, and to have co-operated with you most effectually and essentially in persuading the King of Persia of the necessity of his submitting to those terms of peace which the success of her arms enabled Russia to dictate."

CHAPTER X

MRS. McNEILL'S JOURNEY

1828—1830

As the McNeills were, during the war, the only European residents at Teheran, they led a very quiet and happy home life. Elizabeth "maintained the unbroken good humour and cheerfulness that were always conspicuous in her," and John adds: "I can truly say that I have never seen her express the slightest discontent at the numerous inconveniences to which she has occasionally been subjected." The war with Turkey, on which Russia embarked as soon as the Persian War was over, caused an interruption in the mail service via Constantinople, and the delay in receiving home news distressed Elizabeth's affectionate heart—for instance, on 8th April, 1828, she says her latest home letters are dated 8th June, 1827, and "my heart yearns to hear happy tidings of my kindred." Sometimes friends or travellers passed through, and were always hospitably entertained.

When John went to Casveen and Turkomanchai with the indemnity money, his wife was entrusted with his diplomatic correspondence, and proved herself a good deputy. Colonel Macdonald writes: "I am more than delighted with the promptitude and ability manifested by Mrs. McNeill . . . we have no need of an Agent at the Capital so long as she is there." One of the greatest trials of Elizabeth was the absence of Church and clergy. The English Church service was read by a member of the suite when they were at the Embassy, but, like a true Scot, she missed her sermons, and says: "What a re-

freshment it would be to me now to hear Mr. Andrew Thompson or the faultless Chalmers."

Little Hester, who had been a fat and thriving baby, began to feel the bad effects of the climate, and, fearful of losing her if she remained in Persia, it was decided that Mrs. McNeill should take her home. John accompanied them as far as Tiflis in Russia, and saw them off from there on 26th August, 1828. The journey occupied three months, and the following are extracts from her diary and letters to her husband :

"Arrived at the first station, and rested under the trees for about three hours, took soup and wine, and started again. Reached the second station late at night, found everyone asleep, and could get no water for tea, so went to sleep. An hour after daylight set out again, after having breakfasted. Arrived at the third station about one o'clock.

"*27th.*—Having passed Ananour, the quarantine, without any detention or examination, Mr. M. [a gentleman travelling from Calcutta, who was the only European with them] unfortunately seized with fever and ague. No visible improvement in Hessie yet.

"*28th.*—Remained in the carriage all night. Found this stage difficult, the ascents being so steep and frequent. My carriage went first, and on gaining the first ascent was obliged to return [send back ?] the horses to draw up Mr. M.'s carriage, in consequence of which we remained at least an hour and a half with the courier only. Two wandering tribes passed us, which I was not particularly fond of, but Michael assured me they were not the kind that cut throats. At the first military station we got five soldiers to assist the carriages ; at the second ten more, and all was little enough, the horses, though strong in appearance, being of unwilling dispositions.

"*29th.*—Kobee. Got no sleep last night for fleas. We took a cup of tea, and set off about half-past six o'clock. Roads stony and hilly, with wild mountains and a rapid

stream. Did not stop until we rested for the night at the post-house, where we got fried eggs and fish for dinner. My own health but indifferent since we left Tiflis.

"30*th*.—Passed a perfectly sleepless night from fleas and bugs. Reached Vladicacaus about twelve o'clock, having got fresh foot-guards about halfway at a Russian picket, these now being very frequent and the soldiers most obliging. Vladicacaus is greatly improved within the last five years. There are shops where you may purchase wax candles and ribbons, etc. The bread not bad. Our drivers, being Germans, went slow, and would not be hastened. We cook at a great rate, and I believe Robertson has never had to stir her stumps in such a fashion since she left Stockbridge. She bestows many a sigh on the remembrance of what an *easy* gentleman Dr. McNeill was.

"1*st September*.—Ardong. Set out at 3 a.m. at the beat of the drum, reached military quarters, not bad, called Omouk.

"2*nd September*.—On arriving at the quarantine of Eketerinagorod, to our horror and surprise, we were told we must stay fifteen days, though we had received bills of health from General Sefuaquine, the civil Governor of Tabreez, which he assured us were quite sufficient to pass us at every quarantine. Whilst we remained wrangling at the gate a tribe of mountaineers arrived, who, on our entrance, were put into the same court with us, as was also a young Georgian officer. The hovels belonging to this court consisted of two wretched rooms, the one for Prince Melicoff, the young Georgian, the other for us, whilst Mr. M. was obliged to sleep in his carriage. No one in England could conceive the filth of this hovel, and when we begged for another we were told that if a Russian Colonel came we must leave that for a worse. The insolence and incivility of the gaoler of this quarantine are a disgrace to Russia. For the first five days the heat was intolerable, and Hessie's malady returned. The

plagues of Egypt could not be worse than we endured from fleas, bugs, and common flies. My darling's fine skin suffered dreadfully, and I believe the irritation added much to her fever. On the fifth day the September rains began, and continued almost without any intermission whilst we remained in this worst of purgatories. Our bed was wet every night, and the roof of the hovel leaked in three places and admitted the rain in large and constant drops. The ground of the court was of soft mud, which stuck to your feet whenever you attempted to go to a small hovel called the kitchen of this blessed place, the damps of which, with the bad air produced by so many and such people being crowded into so small a space, reproduced Hessie's complaint, and brought fever on Prince Melicoff. The second day after our arrival we despatched a letter to General Emanuel at Stavaropol, to which we never received any answer. There was no possibility of ascertaining the truth of any. They said one thing to-day and something quite different the next. The principal man pretended to be sick, and the other said he would do nothing. Oh, how I longed for my own clever husband, whose very appearance commanded respect wherever he goes! There were many Russian officers in limbo as well as us, but several parties with the same certificates as us were permitted to depart, while we were detained. Prince Melicoff, who is the handsomest as well as the best-bred Asiatic I have ever met, was kinder than I can express to my little pet, and helped to beguile the tedium of being altogether shut in by the rain in this weary prison. I have discovered that he was the nephew of Manoocher Khan and brother of our friend Mirza Dowad. I shall always feel grateful to him for his kindness to my cross little girl. One day when she happened to be in a good humour she declared, in Persian, that his kisses were as soft as cotton and as sweet as sugar-candy. 'Only look, mamma, what white teeth he has; they are like snow.' I hope she may retain the same good taste through life of which she has

given such early symptoms. Never shall I forget the misery of mind and discomfort of body I endured at this quarantine. No gleam of joy or hope enlightened my wretched mind until the eighth day, when, by chance, Sir H. Willock, his brother, and lady arrived, and, to their horror, found me. General Emanuel was the only person, we were told, whose commands could be obeyed, and Sir Henry, having met him two days before, and having been told by him that it was in consequence of a false report that he had ordered the quarantine laws to be enforced, but that he had, finding the report was false, taken them off. This gave one hopes of escaping, and, to put every iron in the fire, Sir Henry put on his starred coat, brought letters from Count Nesselrode and many other men of power, put into my hands by stratagem his diamond Emperor's box, and desired me to let it pass for the one the Emperor sent my husband. With Major George and the courier, we thus presented ourselves, and were told that the Major did not wish to see anyone. Sir Henry swore he would see him, and with his brother's assistance nearly broke the door. This brought out my gentleman, apparently in perfect health, but on being told what General Emanuel had said, he replied he was unwell and had deputed his authority to the Commissionaire with the grey cap. Oh, the heartless, odious monster, or rather monsters, for such two can rarely, it is to be hoped, meet in the same place! Although it proved in vain, I shall never forget the exertions of my two kind friends on this occasion. They were most eloquent.

"14*th September*.—Hurrah! Out of quarantine! We reached Georvesk about five o'clock. . . . Good bread and civil people.

"15*th*.—Slept at Kalenooka; indifferent accommodation; I remained in the carriage. Hessie much better. We arrived late in the evening at Staverapol, and found every place full. Luckily, had a letter ready to send to General Rosen, who politely gave up his own nice lodging to us.

"17*th*.—Travelled all night, and arrived at the post-house of Gorlitz, myself very ill with dysentery.

"18*th*.—Left Gorlitz, my complaint hourly increasing, till we were obliged to stop at Aristoff. The second day [there] I believed myself to be dying. I felt calm and resigned to the will of God, but prayed earnestly that I might live for yours and my dear Hessie's sake. Here necessity kept us till the 26th, when we moved slowly to Taganrog, and remained there till 9th October. I found the Consul, Mr. Hayre, and his family very kind and attentive, and I thought that I was judiciously treated by M. Meunnier, the French doctor. At Taganrog Mr. M. took his departure ; he was what Count Tolstoi would call an imbecile. He required more attention than six fine ladies, and was a terrible coward to boot. We parted affectionately, and he went off happy with his carriage stuffed with caviare, French wine, stewed apples, and a large jar of butter salted by Robertson.

"*9th October*.—Travelled all night.

"10*th*.—Stopped and took soup at Ivanofka ; myself weak, but my darling Hessie really well."

From thence they went by Geloiadolina, Ceplianca, Harcoff (where there was a tolerable hotel, but where a red shawl was stolen from the carriage), Padrojne (where it rained in torrents and seemed to threaten snow), Ivanofka (roads so heavy they had to take ten horses for the last stage), Kiev (where a broken bridge necessitated their crossing the Dnieper in a boat, but where they passed a "most comfortable night in the Hôtel d'Londres") ; so on to Zitomev and Radzovillof, till they passed from Russian to Austrian territory, and found a friend in Mr. Needham, an English merchant.

On 26th October Mrs. McNeill agreed with a Jew to take them to Hamburg for 103 ducats with six horses in eighteen days. The next stopping-places are Klatchoff, Coravitch, Lemburg, Mochiska, Veroslaf (where snow fell all day), to Jundishoff (where the Jewish Sabbath-keeping detained them a day).

" Set out on 2nd November, snow and bad roads necessitating two additional horses. Dined at Pilson; next day at Bochnick, but did not go down the famous salt mines.

" *5th November.*—Reached Libitz. We passed the frontier and entered Prussia with very little trouble at the Custom-Houses."

Goorbanotch, Breslau, Liaven, Croshen (country rich and beautiful). " Slept at a village where a man was robbed through the night of 200 louis d'ors.

" *12th.*—Passed Frankfort on the Oder, a nice, busy-looking town.

" *13th.*—Reached Berlin ; admired the town much, the buildings so massy and magnificent. The Berlin small beer even better than that in Edinburgh.

" *18th.*—Entered the Duchy of Mecklenburg in the afternoon ; passed a bad night in a peasant's house, one of the horses being sick and not able to go on. We have had *chaussée* for two days now, but within nine miles of Hamburg the sand again begins.

" It was nine o'clock and dark before we reached Hamburg, and raining very heavily.

" *23rd.*—Set sail from Hamburg early in the morning, and reached beloved old England on 27th November, 1828."

After his wife's departure the time passed very wearily for John McNeill. He missed her bright companionship and her clever, sympathetic interest intensely. His letters are full of his longing for her.

The small group of British officials and travellers in Persia had increased to fifteen, three of them ladies—Lady Macdonald, Lady Willock, and Mrs. Campbell ; and for their entertainment Dr. McNeill started a *Tabreez Gazette,* which was entirely written in his own hand. It does not seem to have lived very long. A terrible event happened in the murder of the Russian Envoy, M. Grebaiodoff, and almost all his suite, by Persian rioters at

Teheran. Though the Russian quarters were looted, and even the horses and horse clothing belonging to Russians which happened to be housed in the stable of the British Legation were carried off by the infuriated throng, they inflicted not the slightest injury upon a single article of British property. John McNeill was not at Teheran at the time, but in a letter to his wife (February, 1829) says : " The occurrence shakes all confidence and makes everyone uncomfortable, though, for my own part, I have not a doubt that I should have been as safe at Teheran as anywhere else." Khosroo Mirza, son of the Crown Prince, was sent to St. Petersburg to offer any reparation which the Czar might demand, and Colonel (now Sir John) Macdonald was entreated to request the British Minister at St. Petersburg to add his assurances that the Shah and the Ministers were entirely innocent of the slightest participation in the outrage. Khosroo Mirza's mission was quite successful. He returned with news which must have been very gratifying to his avaricious grandfather, Fetteh Ali Shah, that the Czar not only confined his demands for reparation to the punishment of the actual perpetrators, but that he relinquished his claim for one of the two crores of tomâns still due, and granted a delay of five years for the payment of the other, or would remit that also entirely if Persia would join Russia in an attack on Khiva and Bokhara. Prince Dolgorouki arrived as Envoy from Russia. The troops garrisoned at Tabreez were paraded in his presence and that of the Crown Prince, a *feu de joie* announcing the reconciliation of the two countries.

Little extracts of letters and journals show how Dr. McNeill's time was occupied. The following are from Sir John Macdonald's diary :

" 18*th July*, 1829.—The Prince is ill, and must again be cut for fistula. The operation is to be performed by McNeill at Oojan, for which place H.R.H. will set out in a few days. He has invited Dolgorouki and myself to attend him.

"The old Monarch, in dread of approaching death, has ordered his tomb to be prepared at Koom and sent to Maragha for a slab of marble to be laid upon it, so heavy as to prevent his ashes from being disturbed after his decease.

"*2nd August.*—Dr. McNeill has this day received a note from Lady Willock complaining of constant headaches, of great weakness, of shivering and fainting fits which come upon her unexpectedly and produce debility. He has consequently mounted a horse and gone over to see her. I have also received a polite note from her, sending us some fresh trout, which were acceptable to the gentlemen.

"*20th.*—The Turcoman Chiefs yesterday honoured me with a visit, the main object of which appeared to be to consult Dr. McNeill on two points. First, respecting the best mode of preventing their own eyes being affected by the smoke of their tents in the winter, and exposure to the sun in the summer. Secondly, to ask advice for the treatment of a favourite colt who had got a swelling on his leg, etc."

Elizabeth's letters tell of Hessie's improvement in health, of her own recovery from the hardships of the journey, of her warm reception by all their relations and friends, of her visits among them, and finally of her departure in June on her return journey, accompanied by her nephew William, a boy of twelve, and two Scots maidservants. The merry little traveller, Hester, remained with her aunt, Jane Wilson, whose devotion to her charge was very great.

Mrs. McNeill travelled this time by steamer from Leith to St. Petersburg, where an affection of the eye, which had long troubled her, necessitated a delay. She reached Persia safely in August, after having been absent a year, six months of which was spent in travelling, much of it in very wild country, without adequate protection and with almost no comforts but those afforded by the help

of Count Tolstoi, Mr. Lewis of St. Petersburg, and other friends on the way. Dr. McNeill was prevented from going to meet her at Tiflis, as Dr. Cormack was absent, and his patients could not be left. He appears, however, to have met her at Oojan, as she writes from there to Jane Wilson :

" I go to Tabreez to-day with John and my damsels, and Willie follows in a few days with Colonel Macdonald. We will then, I trust, be stationary for at least nine or ten months. The sight of a trunk and the thought of a journey makes me tremble. I have been tossed about so awfully for the last three years."

In February, 1830, John McNeill received sad news. Writing to D. Wilson, he says :

" I am sure you will sympathize with us in the sorrow which we have endured. I have lost two of my sisters. Mrs. Ainsworth (Anne) died suddenly in September, and Mrs. Duncan (Mary) in November. This last blow has been one of the severest that death could have inflicted on me. It has thrown me further from my own family and chilled my love for my native country. Few human beings have ever possessed qualities more endearing than my beloved Mary. I never knew a heart that teemed with warmer feelings of affection, and in the whole range of my acquaintance I have never seen anyone more purely disinterested than she was. In all my griefs and joys she took more than even a sister's part, and by a thousand tender awakenings of fading recollections kept alive and green in my heart sources of future pleasure which, but for her, would have been lost to me for ever. There is scarcely an agreeable association connected with my earlier years in which she has not a share, and all these are now but mournful shadows of what, while she lived, were gushing springs of tender joy. I have no heart to write to you of other matters."

CHAPTER XI

THE BUSHIRE APPOINTMENT

1830—1832

On 7th June, 1830, Dr. McNeill wrote to Sir John Malcolm :

" Sir John Macdonald has desired me to write to you, and to state without reserve my opinion of the disease under which he is now suffering. I lament to say that I dare not indulge a hope of seeing it terminate favourably. . . . His kindness to all about him is greater even than ever, but often shadowed by a tenderness deep and mournful as the shadow of the tomb."

On 11th June Sir John Macdonald died, after a most lingering and painful illness of nearly six months. Lady Macdonald had gone home, but he was constantly attended by his nephew, Captain Ronald Macdonald, Captain Campbell, and Dr. McNeill. Major Hart, who had long drilled the Persian troops, died almost at the same moment, and was also a great loss to British influence in Persia. Both were buried in Armenian ground.

Captain Campbell immediately assumed charge of affairs, despatches having been received abolishing the post held by Sir H. Willock, and John McNeill, at the late Envoy's particular request, was named, temporarily, sole assistant to Captain Campbell In a despatch on this subject Campbell says :

" Dr. John McNeill, whose attendance and kindness to the Envoy during his long and painful illness are without

parallel. . . . His brilliant talents are too well known for me to descant upon. Sir John said that his important services during the Persian struggle gave him a just title to any advancement here. That his advice, experience, and knowledge of the language might be an invaluable aid to me in the discharge of my public duties, and added to which his superior abilities were never sufficiently called into practice in his medical capacity."

In his last memo Macdonald wrote :

" I bequeath my new Encyclopædia now at Teheran, my edition of Gibbon, and my handsome set of the *Quarterly Review* to Dr. McNeill, as a mark of the very distinguished sense of gratitude I entertain for the affection and kindness manifested towards me by that gentleman during my severe and lingering illness."

In the letters of this year the following passage is of interest :

John McNeill to David Wilson.

" We are to have steam communication from India to England forthwith, either by Egypt or Bussorah, whichever may be found to convey letters most rapidly. Lord Ellenborough seems to give all his attention to Oriental subjects, and to make his presidency of the Board of Control something more than a sinecure. I am glad to see that someone among the Ministers thinks it his duty to take charge of the national interests in the East."

This year, too, permission for the members of the Mission to Persia to wear the ordinary diplomatic dress worn by the Envoys to other Courts was granted.

In the month of June, 1830, a son was born to John and Elizabeth, and named John Robert. Two days after his birth cholera began to appear, and though for ten days people were dying all round them, they did not dare make their escape till the fourteenth day, when they moved to camp at Kahmaneh. The Campbells had left, the

Prince and his family had fled, and such population of the city as could find the means were flying in all directions. The streets were desolate, except that here and there one heard the mournful chant of a passing funeral, or saw some unfortunate creature drop down and die. The mortality at one time amounted to 312 in one day, and in one quarter of the city plague was also raging. The boy born during those troubles did not live long, though in December he is mentioned as "growing a famous little fellow, large and strong and very merry." No mention of his death appears in the letters now extant, but he cannot have lived more than a year.

While they were in this camp a flood came down, which Willie Wilson describes in a letter to his cousin thus :

"While we were sitting at dinner we were startled by the cries of the people above our tents. We ran out, and when we got about a hundred yards above the dining-tent we saw the water coming down in a solid body like a wall about five feet high, bursting right through the camp with a noise like thunder and shaking the ground like an earthquake. It swept away cooking-tent and larder, entered the sleeping-tent, covering everything with mud, and causing great discomfort."

In 1824, as we have seen, John McNeill's ambition was to obtain a political post, and he had applied for the Residency of Bushire. At that time he did not get it, and it seems probable that he withdrew his application, as his great friend, David Wilson, was appointed. Constant correspondence was kept up between them, and so McNeill was kept *au fait* with everything that occurred in the Gulf. In 1830 Wilson sent in his resignation, and on 30th November Sir John Malcolm appointed Dr. John McNeill, saying to Wilson : "He is, beyond all others, the man." Colonel Wilson, who was permitted to leave at once on account of his health (Lieutenant Hennell being left in charge temporarily), travelled home via Persia, in order once more to meet his friends, and after

staying some time with them, pursued his journey via Constantinople, accompanied by young Willie Wilson, who had to return to Scotland to complete his education. The lad had been a great pleasure to his aunt and uncle, who took immense interest in his welfare. Writing to the boy's father, Robert Sym Wilson, John McNeill says :

" He has an excellent head and heart, with fine, high, gentlemanlike principles. It does me a world of good, surrounded as we are here by men devoid of all good feeling, whose hearts know no generous sentiments, to see Willie's cheek glow and his voice swell with indignation when he hears (which is but too often) of some act of oppression or injustice."

About this time, too, Henry and George Willock and the former's family went home. A very sincere friendship had been formed during the years they had spent in Persia with the McNeills. George Willock, in his farewell letter, says : " You and Mrs. McNeill are the sole attachments—and God knows how deeply rooted they are—that I have to link me to Persia."

On 9th December, the cholera having abated, the family returned to Tabreez, where they were commanded to wait and not take up the Bushire appointment till the Government had appointed a new Envoy to Persia.

There is nothing of special interest to recount with regard to their life in Persia at this time, but letters from their various correspondents give us interesting glimpses of contemporary history.

Letter from Lieutenant Hennell, at Bushire.

" *26th April*, 1831.

" The Rt. Hon. John, Earl of Clare, has at length arrived in Bombay, dreadfully out of humour, having been kept waiting in the neighbourhood of Thebes nearly three weeks for Sir John [Malcolm], with whom he had an interview of only half an hour. His Lordship's disgust reached a climax by being detained seven weeks at

Jeddah by some mismanagement in the article of coals. . . . Reports are very current that he brings out an order in his pocket to reduce all salaries, from the Members of the Council downwards, twenty-five per cent."

Captain Campbell to Dr. McNeill.

"*17th April*, 1831.

" There has been another desperate battle in Poland. The Russians acknowledge to have lost eight or ten thousand men. The loss of the Poles is unknown, but must have been considerable from the desperation with which they fought. From the *Petersburg Gazette*, you know, it is impossible to learn any satisfactory details. . . . Mr. O'Connel is cited to appear before a special jury on the charges of inciting sedition and conspiracy. . . . The Army at home is augmented by 10,000 men. . . . France is not yet quiet ; there is a powerful party in the nation for war. . . . The King of Prussia has issued a proclamation desiring all his subjects to withdraw from Polish territory, under penalty of being considered as traitors and of having all their property confiscated. . . . A new Pope, Gregory XVI., is elected, but the people are not satisfied : they want a temporal as well as a spiritual chief."

Nearly a year passed in waiting ; it was spent partly in Teheran, then in a summer camp at Astara—" Elizabeth hunting beetles for James," and John hunting hares with his greyhounds. They returned to Tabreez on 30th October, 1831, and soon after private letters from India told that the Government had at last settled the matter of the new Envoy, and appointed Major Stewart, who, with his suite (whose names were also given), was to leave by the ship *Amherst* immediately ; also that a Commandant, Adjutant, and four additional officers were coming to drill the Persian Army, and a Major Stock to take the place of Major Hart, deceased.

This news was so definite that John McNeill, in con

sideration for the state of his wife's health, decided to apply for leave to depart for Bushire without waiting for official confirmation. Leave was given in the following letter from Captain Campbell :

"TABREEZ,
"14*th December*, 1831.

"SIR,

"The tranquillity which our Mission is likely to enjoy, and the comparative state of inactivity into which it will be thrown for some time from the approach of winter, which has caused a temporary cessation of those active operations under the Prince Royal which have so long and so steadfastly engaged our attention, combined with other weighty considerations with which you have personally acquainted me, seem to promise a favourable moment for your quitting Tabreez to assume charge of that high and important station to which you are appointed.

"Whilst, therefore, I shall have to regret the loss of your valuable services, I yield my sanction to the request contained in your letter of yesterday's date with the firm conviction that the zeal and talent you have displayed in the discharge of the duties entrusted to you since being under my orders will now be called forth in a more extended and novel field of action, and be productive of permanent and important benefits to our Indian possessions.

"I eagerly avail myself of this occasion to return you my best thanks for the aid we have all derived from your professional abilities as Surgeon to the Mission during a period when sickness and pestilence have devastated every portion of the Empire, and in the hope that success and happiness will attend you."

Upon the very day almost that John McNeill made up his mind and asked permission to start for Bushire a despatch was written in Bombay Castle seriously affecting his future. His friend Sir John Malcolm, who knew his worth, was no longer Governor, and had been succeeded

by Lord Clare, who took the unprecedented course of altering appointments made by his predecessor. Unaware of this, however, Dr. and Mrs. McNeill started on December 22nd. Some idea of their adventurous journey may be gathered from the following extracts from letters of Mrs. McNeill to her sister and nephew :

"Bagdad,
"*24th January*, 1832.

"Very thankful I am to be able to tell you that here we have arrived safe and sound on the 16th. The accommodation in Persia is not particularly luxurious, but in Arabia it is fifty times worse. We slept every night in the stables of caravansaries, as black as pitch, liker the dens of robbers than the sleeping-places of Christians. Sometimes we were nearly suffocated with smoke, none of the places having either windows or chimneys. Mercifully we all kept well, and became by degrees reconciled to our fate. The Tigris, which runs through the city, is a fine object, and the number of date-trees by which it is surrounded add a good deal of richness to the scene, but nothing more in its praise can be said. The inhabitants are a wretched-looking race, much inferior in beauty and intelligence to the Persians."

"*24th February* [Bagdad again].

"We had reached within one day's journey of Bussorah when we met Major Taylor, who immediately sent his man on with despatches for John, which we were roused in the dead of night to receive. These proved to be letters from Government cancelling his appointment to Bushire, in consequence of orders from the Court of Directors, sent in reply to a petition from the civilians, who had bitterly complained that Sir John Malcolm had given so many of their situations to military officers. All our own letters, with the exception of the one with John's appointment, have gone on by way of Ispahan to Tabreez, so what exactly now may be our final fate we cannot tell. The statements contained in Major Taylor's

letters are that, in consequence of certain reductions in the allowances, Major Stewart has refused to go to Persia, that Campbell is confirmed Envoy, John Assistant. Lord Clare writes that he has written to all the native authorities that the reason why John is not permitted to join his post at Bushire is that his services in the North of Persia cannot be dispensed with. There is something rather new in punishing people for great and successful exertions, yet so it is in our case. Reward nowadays seems to be bestowed on those only who do nothing, while upon those who have sacrificed every enjoyment, and been most successful in promoting in an eminent degree the public service, disappointment and mortification is bestowed."

"*March*, 1832.

"Ever since my residence in Persia, now nearly nine years, we have been so tossed about on political duty at a moment's warning whenever there was any affair of importance to transact that the thoughts of a comparatively settled home, and at last reaping some reward for painful endurance, was most sweet to my wearied heart. Now all my happy dreams have faded into air, and if ever good fortune should overtake us, the prospect is so distant as to take from it all charm."

"On the Tigris
[*Undated*].

"It is not easy to imagine a position more perplexing and disagreeable than the one we are now placed in. The plague is at Bussorah and at Bagdad, and there is a quarantine of thirty days at Bushire. But for this last circumstance I think we would have proceeded to that place. We have therefore determined to try to reach Hamadan, but as the procuring of mules at Bagdad at the present time is uncertain, we do not know whether we shall be able to go beyond it, and in that case will be obliged to collect provisions, and trust in hoping that all, though so unpromising, may yet be for the best.

"Some days after reaching Coote we had the *pleasure* of a night attack from the Arabs. They did not attempt to board us, but kept firing random shots at us from the shore until at last we were obliged to fire the boat's big gun, which ended the business, as far as we knew, without bloodshed on either side. The action took place in the dark, after we had been some hours in bed, and the noise and confusion was beyond what a novice like me could have formed an idea of. I was in a horrible fright, but said my prayers and kept quiet."

"Hamadan,
"28*th March*, 1832.

"Our journey down to Bagdad was comparatively agreeable. Lots of *Istikball*, *Sheereemis*, *Shekar* with guards of Koords, and Eels of all descriptions.

"I shall never forget our trip across the desert, nor the journey we afterwards performed from Bagdad to this place (Hamadan). Snows have not, in the memory of man, ever been so deep as this year they have been all over Persia (*Inshalla* they will root out the plague). On two occasions we came to places the day after travellers had perished, near the Munzels, and we saw flocks of sheep lying frozen to death. My *tukt*,* without exaggeration, fell from twelve to twenty times daily. I had often to walk from five to seven miles knee-deep in snow or mud. John never got leave to sit his horse half an hour at a time, and had he not been with me with his powerful arm and steady mind the *tukt* would oftentimes have been abandoned to its fate.

"We had, however, in the midst of all, great blessings to be grateful for, and some comforts. In all the miseries to which we were exposed no one suffered in health, and among all our servants not one emitted a murmur or the slightest token of discontent. Of course, they all have had some reward, but for such conduct one feels a degree of gratitude towards them that will not easily pass away. Anne Gibb (one of the Scots servants) behaved nobly,

* A horse litter.

courageously mounting unbroken colts and suffering, without a frown on her visage, hardships that seldom fall in a woman's way. The night before we reached Bagdad we halted at an encampment of Arab black tents. We were awfully cold, and Anne and I ventured with an Arab Sheikh to go into one of them and seat ourselves with the party round the fire. They were the funniest specimens of human beings I have yet had the honour to become acquainted with. They were extremely civil and kind to us. The gentlemen wore a kind of camel's hair shirt (their only covering), which was fastened round the waist with a leathern girdle. . . . They had their brawny limbs greased, with a view, I suppose, of making the rain run off without wetting them. The ladies were better covered, but they wore odious nose jewels of gold and silver, and had their lips painted dark blue. Many of the children had their small noses pierced and a small wooden peg thrust in to keep open the aperture until rich enough or old enough to possess jewels. They gave us birstled wheat, which was prepared with salt and which was really excellent, and plenty of moss and milk, and a *pushkish* of lamb.

"We are accommodated here at the house of a Persian called Mirza Hosham, a worshipper of Tarangees, and our quarters are most comfortable. His ladies are rather too fond of me, but on the whole are considerably more endurable than most Persian ladies whom it has been my misfortune to encounter. They made good an *entrée* on me one morning before I was dressed, but I immediately showed fight and drove them off, and had a padlock put on the door that separates their court from mine. Ever since they have been attempting to make the amends honourable by sending me fruits, pillaus, and *noon i sheereen*, and expressing great contrition for the mistake. I mean to forgive them *in time*, but from past experience I must not be in too great a hurry about it.

"The Pacha of Bagdad while we were there presented John with a very nice Arab, a flea-bitten grey, adorned

with very curious silver trappings. He gave a horse called ' The Shah ' as a return present."

At this place (Hamadan) Mrs. McNeill's fourth child, Elizabeth Jane, was born on 30th March.

Distressing as these accounts of their hardships are, Elizabeth does not dwell upon the worst in her letters, no doubt desiring to spare her sister's feelings. Four horses had to be abandoned, or died from exhaustion or want of food ; the travellers were exposed for five days to constant rain by day and frost by night, without covering or shelter except their cloaks, and without food, except some corn, subject at any moment to be attacked by the plundering parties that were then roaming all over the country. Hundreds of the dead bodies of those who had died of the plague were collected in the caravansaries, which afforded the only shelter they could obtain. They had no alternative but to toil on in the snow, which was everywhere from two to six feet deep, and through which they could only advance with extreme fatigue and labour at the rate of from half a mile to one mile an hour. They were frequently exposed for fifteen or sixteen hours without accomplishing above eight or nine miles. Where the snow was soft it was impossible to ride, and John had to support his wife (then within a fortnight of her confinement) for several hours daily while she struggled through the snow knee-deep, and to seek for her the shelter of a stable, where, in the deficiency of fuel, they might hope to protect themselves in some degree from the intense cold by collecting their mules and horses, harassed by the continual apprehension that her suffering might cause her to be prematurely taken ill in such a situation or on the road.

They were for several days in a crowded boat, exposed to the infection of the plague, which had appeared fatally among the crew, Mrs. McNeill lying with only a grating between her and a man dying of the plague, and seeing his breath coming through it. In spite of all, they

reached Tabreez in safety five months after they left it. In reality, the fact that they did not reach Bushire was, though they did not yet know it, fortunate. There were many letters congratulating them on not being there, because the plague was so severe the Residency had to be deserted, the Europeans taking refuge on the island of Corgo (Karagu ?), where they lived in tents for four months. Corgo is a low-lying, sandy island three or four miles in length and half a mile broad, called by one writer " This cursed sandbank," where " we have several times had our tents blown down over our heads, and it is now getting preciously hot." In Bushire " two thousand dead bodies lay in the streets and houses unburied," so it was well Elizabeth and her babe were not there.

On 28th March, while still at Hamadan, John McNeill prepared a strong memorial to the Governor in Council for some recompense for the heavy expense and hardships to which he had been put, as well as for the disappointment he had suffered. Part of the appeal is as follows :

" The Resident in the Persian Gulf holds an independent office, in which all his proceedings are under the immediate observation of Government. His beneficial exertions, whatever they may be, are noticed to his advantage, and his opportunities of obtaining distinction are consequently frequent ; his residence, for the most part, permanent, in a house provided by Government for his accommodation ; an allowance is granted him for his table, and his personal salary is 1,500 rupees a month. He is not called upon to perform the expensive and fatiguing journeys to which the Assistant to the Mission in Persia is subjected, and here your memorialist would beg leave to state that since he has been in Persia he has travelled a distance of above *twenty-two thousand miles on duty*, a great proportion of which has been performed at the rate of from eighty to one hundred miles a day on horseback, but for the expenses of no part of these journeys has he ever preferred any claim. He has to provide himself

with a house at Tabreez, to maintain his own table and establishment in a manner suited to the respectability of his position in the Mission and in this country. He has to furnish tents and baggage-cattle when he moves, and in the ordinary course of his duty he cannot hope to have a less distance to travel yearly than from fifteen hundred to two thousand miles. . . .

"He leaves it to the liberality and wisdom of his honourable masters to give to his humble representations such attention as they may think them entitled to receive, confident that they will not at once deprive him of *higher rank*, of *better opportunities of seeking distinction*, of *greater personal comfort* in a more fixed residence, and of *superior pecuniary advantages*, without affording him or permitting him to hope for some recompense; and that they will not call upon him to bear the expenses of a distressing journey from Tabreez to the vicinity of Bussorah and back to Tabreez, which was rendered more costly by his being received everywhere as Resident in the Persian Gulf."

This was sent with a strong covering letter from Captain Campbell, and the Bombay Government replied that, "In consideration of Mr. McNeill's long and meritorious services," they had forwarded the memorial to England, and would be "highly gratified" if the honourable Court should "be induced to reimburse him for the heavy expenses he incurred during a season of unexampled severity" as "proof of their consideration for an old and faithful servant," but that they could recommend nothing more.

The journey had cost 2,000 tomâns (£833 6s. 8d.); the loss of actual luggage and the loss on house and furniture, which they had sold on leaving Tabreez, came to about £250; and John McNeill was further deprived of three months' salary and allowances, amounting to £375, he being in neither one appointment nor the other during January, February, and March, 1832. He had,

moreover, thought it only just to compensate his servants, and this had cost him over £100. At first the Court of Directors entirely declined to reimburse him for any of these sums, which amounted to over £1,200 in all. Five years later, however, when he was able to bring influence to bear upon them, they repaid the actual travelling, the three months' salary and allowances, and £140 compensation for suffering and hardships—*i.e.*, hardly more than would cover what he considered due to his servants.

The duties of First Assistant and Medical Officer combined, to which he now returned, carried salary and allowances of 1,250 rupees a month; the Bushire appointment, of which he had been deprived, gave 1,500 rupees a month and a house.

The great object of both John and Elizabeth McNeill was to save enough money to enable them to retire and live at home. They fixed upon an income of £800 a year as the minimum, and every year they sent what they could to Robert Sym Wilson, he, with Duncan McNeill (then Sheriff of Perth), investing it for them. As showing his prudence in this matter, the following is quoted from a letter of 26th May, 1832:

"I leave it to you and Duncan to decide the matter and determine what description of stock you will purchase for me, or whether you will purchase Government securities at all, always keeping in mind that to preserve the capital safe and beyond risk is the first object. I could have had eight per cent. per annum from the first houses of agency in India, but it cost one some wear and tear of body and mind to put it together, and I cannot now afford to risk any portion of it whatever the temptation may be."

His wisdom in this was soon to be proved. A few months afterwards a series of failures took place among the Bombay business houses, and several of Dr. McNeill's friends were entirely ruined.

CHAPTER XII

THE KHORASSAN CAMPAIGN

1832, 1833

We must look once more at the state of Persia in order to understand the work which John McNeill was called upon to devote himself to again. The following unsigned despatch in his handwriting gives a good idea of the disturbances of that time. They are typical of the chronic unrest under the Persian system of government.

"Camp, Khosroe Shah,
"30*th September*, 1830.

"Sir,

"I have the honour to state for the information of the Right Honourable the Governor-General in Council that since the date of my last despatches nothing of importance has occurred in the foreign relations of this Court. But in the interior of the kingdom there have been military operations carried on by the Princes, Governors of Provinces, which may serve to indicate the state into which this country will probably be thrown on the death of the Shah.

"Md. Hoosein Mirza, son of the late Mahommed Ali Mirza of Kermanshah, was removed from his father's Government, to which he had succeeded, and the province was given to Abbas Mirza, who last year reinstated his nephew under his own immediate orders in the chief authority in Kermanshah. The district of Looristan had, however, in the interim been separated from that province, and after passing through the hands of several Princes, had lately fallen under

the authority of Md. Lucky Mirza of Boroojird. Md. Hoosein Mirza, desirous to recover a district which had formed part of his father's Government, and instigated, it is said, by his immediate superior, the Prince Royal, succeeded in attaching to his interests a part of the population of that country, and with a considerable force proceeded to occupy it.

"While Md. Hoosein Mirza was thus engaged, a dispute had arisen between Md. Lucky Mirza of Boroojird and Sheikh Ali Mirza, Governor of Mallayer, which they prepared to decide by the sword. Both took the field, and Md. Lucky Mirza, having made a rapid march, surprised and routed the Mallayer forces, capturing their artillery and camp equipage. Elated by this success, the Prince of Boroojird marched against Md. Hoosein Mirza, but, advancing with little caution, was in his turn attacked and routed by the Kermanshah troops. The whole of his artillery and baggage was taken, and he fled to Boroojird, closely pursued by his nephew, who retains possession of Looristan, and who, it is supposed, will be confirmed by the Shah in the government of the country he has thus conquered.

"In the south-east of Persia there have also been serious disturbances. Three years ago the inhabitants of Yezd, headed by one of their hereditary chiefs, Abdul Rezah Khan, drove from the province the King's son, Md. Wullee Mirza, whose oppressions had become intolerable. The Shah, finding that it would be difficult to reduce the country to obedience, and Abdul Rezak Khan, having tendered his submission and sent his son as a hostage, was confirmed in the government under a promise that he would deliver up the treasure amassed by Md. Wullee Mirza, which has been seized by the Khan when the Prince fled. Part of this treasure only had been surrendered, and the Prince Royal had, at the Shah's instigation, taken some steps to enforce the payment of the remainder when Hassan Ali Mirza, Governor of Kerman, sent a force against Yezd under

the command of Zekie Khan, formerly Vizier of Fars and now Minister of Kerman. A report has just reached us that Yezd has surrendered to this officer, and though it still requires confirmation, there seems to be no sufficient reason to doubt its accuracy.

"The Cholera Morbus still prevails in some parts of this province, and has a second time this year committed ravages at Teheran and Ispahan, in the former of which cities it has caused a great mortality.

"The plague has reappeared at Tabreez, and has extended to many of the villages in the vicinity. . . . The deaths caused by the Cholera and plague up to the present time are estimated in the most authentic statements at more than thirty thousand. The confusion produced by the flight of the population from the towns and villages on the appearance of disease amongst them, and the facility which this state of things affords the peasantry to evade the payment of the revenue, as well as the inability of many of the families which have been deprived of their most efficient members, or who have abandoned their crops and much of their property, to pay any part of the Government dues, will cause a large deficiency in the revenues of Azerbijan for this year. H.R.H.'s finances are not, therefore, likely to be relieved, for some time at least, from the embarrassment under which they have laboured ever since the conclusion of the war. But as a small part only of the Russian indemnity remains to be discharged, it may be hoped after this year, if nothing untoward should occur, that the pecuniary difficulties of which H.R.H. has so much complained will no longer be urgent.

"The Koordish tribe Babek inhabit the country of Soolimaneeah, lying on the borders of Azerbijan and Bagdad. This territory belongs by treaty to Turkey, but the tribe which inhabits it have for many years been dependent rather on the Prince Royal than on the Pacha of Bagdad, to whose Government their country appertains. Two years ago, in consequence of a war with

the chief of the Hukaru tribe of Rowandooz, Mahmood, Pacha of Soolimaneeah, sought the assistance of Abbas Mirza, and in consideration of a sum of money was furnished by the Prince with a body of troops and two European officers to assist in conducting the operations against Rowandooz and to discipline a body of the Koords of Soolimaneeah, which Mahmood had determined to organize on the model of the Persian regular infantry. The failure of the expedition against Rowandooz, the oppressions of Mahmood in his own country, and the disgust conceived by the Koords against the innovations of their chief, particularly in consequence of his attempt to introduce European discipline and to form a standing army, together with the intrigues of his brother, Sooliman Beg, induced the people to revolt. Mahmood was driven from his government, and Sooliman assumed the government. Both appealed to Abbas Mirza, who, finding the popular feeling so strongly pronounced in favour of Sooliman, agreed to confirm him in the government provided he would engage to pay within a specified time the sum of ten thousand tomâns, which was alleged to be the amount of arrear due on account of the tribute which H.R.H. had for some years regularly exacted from the Babeh. This sum Sooliman engaged to pay before the stipulated period. But Mahmood, who had sought refuge in Persia, was allowed to reside on the frontier adjoining his former government, and as he still retained some property and had every facility for pushing his intrigues in Soolimaneeah and connecting himself with neighbouring chiefs, he succeeded early in the spring in collecting an army composed chiefly of Bilboss Koords, with which he attacked Soolimaneeah. But, having been defeated with considerable loss, he again fled into Persia, and renewed his intrigues at the Court of the Prince Royal. The time had now arrived when Sooliman Pacha ought to have discharged the arrear of tribute, and though he gave assurances that he was collecting the money and would have had it collected by the prescribed time had

he not been disturbed by the attempt of Mahmood, still the friends of the latter at H.R.H.'s Court induced the Prince to declare that Sooliman, having failed in his engagement, had forfeited his authority, and that Mahmood was to be reinstated. About two months ago a force was ordered to hold itself in readiness to march into Koordistan. Karaman Mirza, son of H.R.H., took nominal command of the forces employed on this service, which consisted of three battalions of regular infantry and the contingent of cavalry furnished by the Wallee of Persian Koordistan. On the approach of these troops Sooliman Pacha retired to the vicinity of Kerkook in the Turkish territories, and the Persian forces advanced to the vicinity of Soolimaneeah, which place they entered. Mahmood Pacha, who accompanied the army, is still, it is said, so unpopular that it is impossible to reinstate him in authority, and it is thought probable that H.R.H. will find it indispensable to the tranquillity of the tribe to give it a chief from his own family. As the Cholera Morbus, however, has for a time interrupted the operations of H.R.H.'s troops, it is possible that some movement in favour of Sooliman may take place in the tribe, and it is reported that the Pacha of Bagdad has espoused his cause.

"To George Swinton, Esq.,
"*Chief Secretary of Government.*"

It was to a country unsettled thus, and ruled by an old and failing monarch, that, in 1832, Captain Campbell was installed as Envoy. His salary and allowances were on a reduced scale, and the amount allowed for presents was insignificant. Present-giving was "one of the greatest annoyances," to quote McNeill, "to be encountered by a new Envoy, who has the choice of being liberal with the certainty that he is raising the expectations of everyone with whom in future he will have to communicate, or, being more economical, with the knowledge that many tales injurious to his personal character will be circu-

lated. . . . There is scarcely a present which does not excite the jealousy of someone ; either it is more than some man who thinks himself of equal rank has received, or it is less than the receiver thinks he has a right to expect. . . . But the evil is unavoidable ; the system of giving presents is an evil so deeply rooted, so long established, and so uniformly acted upon by all the Powers which have sent Missions to Persia, that it would be difficult, perhaps impossible, for any individual to dispense with them."

Captain Campbell's first difficulty arose over this matter. During the first week of May he sent letters from his camp, near the capital, to the Shah and Ministers announcing his appointment, and as they had not been acknowledged by 13th June, he ordered Dr. McNeill to proceed to Teheran as rapidly as possible to ascertain the cause. Dr. McNeill found that H.M. the Shah, " having been informed of the contents of the Envoy's letters, expressed his surprise and discontent at the smallness of the presents." McNeill's account, sent to Captain Campbell, of his interview with His Persian Majesty and Ministers is worth quoting in full :

" In the afternoon I was summoned into the presence of His Majesty. After having said a great many flattering and even kind things to me, His Majesty inquired the intelligence from Europe, spoke of Turkey and its political situation, of Poland, of France, of England and its trade with Persia—of everything he could think of, in short, but the business on which he knew I had come, hurrying from one subject to another without pause, and at length gave the usual signal to take leave without giving me any opportunity to open my business. But on his giving the signal, while the Minister was moving towards the door, I stood still, and stated that I had a representation to make to H.M., and, without waiting for a reply, proceeded to say that you had not yet received answers to official communications which had been delivered to

H.M. and to the Ministers above a month ago, and I respectfully requested H.M. to direct answers to be prepared as soon as possible. H.M. replied that an answer had been sent to the Amir i Nizam. I explained that no communication had been made to you from any quarter, and that I had been sent expressly to ascertain the cause of the delay. H.M. desired that I would retire and confer with Mirza Abdul Hassan on the subject. I replied that I had already communicated with H.E. all I had to say on that subject. The Shah then requested me to confer again with the Khan, and let the result be made known to him. I found that it was impossible to press the matter further at that moment, and took my leave in stating that H.M. was, of course, [at] liberty to do as he might think proper.

"On leaving his presence I met in the garden the Ameen ud Dowleh and the Ausef ud Dowleh, to whom I explained the nature of my interview, stating that even I, a stranger, felt ashamed to see H.M. so far degrade himself. We were joined by Zohrab Khan, the King's Treasurer, who proposed to go immediately to the Shah and represent how unbecoming such proceedings were. He returned in a few minutes unsuccessful. The Ameen ud Dowleh took me aside, and said he felt deeply ashamed of the disgrace to which H.M. had subjected himself and his Court, and after some conversation on the means of arranging the matter, at length said in a tone of agitation which I shall never forget: 'You have long been my friend and the friend of this Government; you rendered me services when I was in disgrace, and you served Persia well in her utmost need; for God's sake, for the sake of the friendship which has been between us and between our nations, do not allow this discussion to proceed. I pledge my word as an honest man to pay from my own purse whatever the Shah may demand beyond what you are authorized to give, that perhaps we may be able to save the small fragment of character that is left to us.' I told H.E. that, though I had the

highest respect for his motives and the most perfect confidence in the sincerity of his proposition, it must be quite obvious that our Envoy could not possibly agree to such an arrangement. In the meantime Mirza Abdul Hassan returned to the Shah, and after some further conversation with H.M., came to me, begging that I would agree to give something, however small, beyond what I had already proposed. The Moatamid joined us, and, after an infinite deal of unprofitable talking and wrangling, in which we made no progress towards an arrangement, I proposed that, now it appeared that the respect shown to an Envoy was to be in proportion to the amount of his presents, a paper should be made out showing the different degrees of respect and attention that might be had for any given sum—in short, a *nerkh* (price current) of H.M.'s favours. The Moatamid said: 'These are hard words, but we have laid ourselves open to them, and you are too far behind the curtain to be shut out now; but rather than endure the obloquy of such proceedings I am ready to pay whatever the Shah demands that this miserable affair may be hushed up.' I told him this proposal to raise a subscription for us was as bad as the King's conduct, but that I would agree to let a gun and a lustre be added to the presents already offered. On ascertaining the value of these articles, the two Ministers decided that the amount was sufficient, and told me that I ought to consider the whole thing as satisfactorily arranged.

"*Saturday*, 16*th*.—Before daylight this morning a man from the Minister for Foreign Affairs came to request that I would not despatch the messenger to you till I should have heard from him again. About six o'clock Mirza Mahommed Ali came to me to say that at midnight the King had sent Hagee Mirza Reza, the Chief Eunuch, to the Minister to say that he would receive nothing less than had been given by former Envoys. . . .

"I have reason to know that H.M. will not venture to decline receiving you, and will not go even so far as to

demand in any public letter a specific sum. He is afraid of committing himself by writing such things, and I feel assured also that you can give him more than he now expects. I would therefore advise you to advance as if you had not yet heard anything unfavourable, and I think I can answer for your reception being all you can desire. I have purposely kept considerably below the mark that you might have the power to give more than I engaged for. . . . It will not do to leave nothing for the Prince. You know, if the difficulties of H.R.H. had not been so great, how much he was inclined to resent what he considered Sir John Macdonald's neglect of him; but you may throw all you intended for the Ministers, with the exception of about one thousand tomâns, into the present to the Shah, making [it] altogether worth about five thousand ducats, and H.M. would now, I am sure, be rejoiced to receive that amount."

It was not for several days that the Shah gave in, and then only because Mr. McNeill threw out hints that the Envoy would retire to Tabreez, and inform his Government that he had been obliged to abandon a Court which he could only reach by payment of a sum of money. In his report, dated June 30th, McNeill says:

"I cannot, however, conclude this report without stating that H.M.'s feelings were not exclusively avaricious. I discovered from his confidential servants, though not till after matters had been arranged, that the Shah felt the great reduction in the amount of the presents to be an indication that the result of the last war with Russia had taken away much of his importance, and that the British Government, regarding Persia as a crippled power, was no longer inclined to propitiate its sovereign by the means which, up to this time, had been adopted by every new Embassy. One expression used by H.M. was very remarkable as an evidence of his own belief that he is not regarded with so much consideration by foreign Courts as he was in other times. In answer to observations

made by a member of his own family in the discussions respecting the presents, he said: 'They do what they like now. They think the waters have closed over me.'"

While the Envoy and his Assistant were away presenting their credentials to the Shah, Mrs. Campbell and Mrs. McNeill remained quietly at Tabreez with their children, the former's daughter Annie "like a little fairy" and Elizabeth Jane "thriving beautifully." "We don't expect our Sahiban back for four months," Elizabeth adds, and then asks her sister to send out "some Loch Fyne herring" and "a little box of oatmeal *in which* a few bottles of Highland whisky might be packed, . . . also in a tin case a few cakes of Rankine's shortbread and a pound or two of Mrs. Waddell's gingerbread-nuts. . . . These all being intended for an acceptable present to Captain and Mrs. Campbell, who are devoted to good eating."

A little note from John McNeill to his wife, not fully dated, seems to belong to this time:

"*8th February.*

"My Ever-Dearest,

"I have to thank you for your Nos. 5, 6, and 7, with the letters accompanying them, which I received this forenoon. Your judgment is equal to your prudence and affection. I am quite proud of you, believe me. I say it with a full heart and eye. . . .

"Everything goes well. God bless my love.

"J. McN."

Fetteh Ali Shah was an old man, and all Abbas Mirza's supporters urged him to leave Tabreez and live at the capital, so that he might make his succession sure. He, however, told Mr. McNeill that he felt his military reputation had suffered by his being defeated by an enemy too strong for him—Russia, and that his brothers would therefore entertain hopes of opposing him with success. He, on this account, sought for a field in which to employ his army, and proposed the subjugation of

Khorassan, which had long been in a state of nearly open rebellion, his ulterior object being an attack upon Herat, which at one time had formed part of Persia, as it was under the Sufawi dynasty. He complained of the delay which had occurred in sending him the arms and additional officers promised by the British Government, these officers having been promised only on his undertaking to employ none of other European nationality.

The Prince went to Khorassan early in 1832, a British officer being in command of part of his troops. This officer's want of prudence and diplomatic qualities caused the Government much trouble. The machinations of a Polish adventurer named Borowski, who had also joined the Prince, further complicated matters, so an Order came from the Government of India that Dr. McNeill should be deputed to Khorassan without delay, and that his despatches were to be sent direct to the Political Assistant on the North-West Frontier of India, and not through Captain Campbell, as usual. John McNeill was eager for this service. His wife writes: "His spirit is an unconquerable one. He sets out with as much zeal for the public service as if that service had not injured him within a hairbreadth of his life." She writes of herself:

"My spirit [is] occasionally weary and worn out with various discomforts, to which, for us, there seems no end. . . . I feel such an additional loathing to everything connected with the country that, were John sure of being made *Ellchee* [Envoy] at the end of five years, I feel that I could scarcely rejoice in it, or, in fact, at any aggrandizement that is to keep us longer from our home, our child, our brethren, and the rational uses of existence. I struggle all I can against these feelings, but I find it all in vain; sleeping or waking, they are ever present in my thoughts."

The following quotation from Sir Henry Rawlinson's "England and Russia in the East" throws much light on the political situation at this time:

"The Khorassan Campaign, of which we are now treating, was the germ from whence sprung our own Afghan War, and it merits, therefore, more than a passing notice. That Russia had instigated the original movement, that she took a marked interest in the progress of the war, that she ever pointed to ulterior conquest, were all matters of notoriety; but the objects which she had in view in thus acting were by no means so patent to observation, nor have they ever perhaps been submitted to a full and fair inquiry. . . . That object was to estrange England from Persia, to create an antagonism of interests between the two countries, and thus force the weaker Power into a coalition with herself, the natural results of such a coalition being that the moral power and influence of the Russian Empire in the East would be greatly strengthened, while there would be entailed on British India either the anxiety and embarrassment of a sense of danger or the expense of a state of preparation."

To meet these schemes on the part of Russia, to nullify the evil counsels of her emissaries, to keep up the prestige of Great Britain, John McNeill strained every nerve. He was almost alone. His chief, Captain (now Sir John) Campbell, was in many ways unsuited to his position as Envoy: his petty vanity, his ungovernable temper, his untruthfulness, the want of confidence he displayed in his own assistants, and his entire want of tact and consistency in dealing with the Shah and Ministers, made Mr. McNeill's task most difficult—indeed, wellnigh impossible. How hard he worked and what acumen he possessed are well shown in the following extracts from his diary of a few days' work, 10th to 15th November, 1832:

"10*th*.—Returned with the army through the Durhund, and encamped on the Meshed side of it. The night before I had had a long conference with the Kayim Makim and an audience of the Prince Royal. H.E. I found in a small tent, which was very cold. He commenced his conversa-

tion with some questions about the treatment of his eyes, which, he said, were getting weak from excessive exertion in writing. He made several attempts to omit the little politenesses which are so much valued in Persia, but finding that I made corresponding omissions on my part, and in a manner somewhat more marked than his, he desisted. Having gained no advantage in this kind of wretched contention, in which the Persians delight as a kind of feeling of the pulse and trying the tone of a person with whose views they are not perfectly acquainted, H.E. then dismissed everyone but Mahomed Hoosein Khan, and gave me a long dissertation on the extent and nature of his own influence and the unbounded confidence of the Prince, which I perfectly understood to mean that his present should be in proportion to his influence. But I gained some advantage by asking him what was his object in explaining these things to me, for H.E. had gone on, confident that he was adding some ducats to what I proposed to give by every word he uttered, and the question I put was not one which it was easy to answer. H.E., brought up in this way, carried the conversation to the Prince's operations, and to the proposed movement upon Herat, which he connected with a dissertation on the low state of the Prince's finances, and again insisted on the necessity of taking Herat and probably Kandahar, which he said were parts of Persia, talking also mysteriously of Scinde and of the Prince's want of money in such a way as led me to believe that H.E. imagined I might have been instructed to endeavour to prevent the Prince from going to Herat, and for that purpose might be empowered to give money. I was the more inclined to believe that this was H.E.'s object as I had heard from M. Barowski that he had been consulted about the probability of my being sent to the Prince to oppose his movement on Herat, and had told the Persian authorities that the British Government had no right to interfere. I, therefore, knowing that H.E. was not quite comfortable regarding the account of the Prince's

revenues and disbursements, expressed my surprise that H.R.H., having drawn little or nothing from Azerbijan since his departure, should even now be at a loss for money, and lamented that the addition of Yezd, Kerman, and the greater part of Khorassan to his government should not have improved his circumstances, expressing myself unable to comprehend how all H.R.H.'s revenues were expended, seeing he had not even paid any portion of his army. This was very delicate ground, and H.E. was glad to change the subject and ask me the news of Teheran.

" I related to H.E. what had passed in my last audience of the Shah, and informed him of the messages with which I had been charged by H.M. to H.R.H., expressing H.M.'s entire approval of all H.R.H.'s proceedings; that H.M had commanded me to say to H.R.H. : ' The Shah has at all times been satisfied with your conduct, more particularly now that you have rendered a great service to the State. Your proceedings have at all times been more acceptable to the Shah than those of his other sons, and he now feels assured that his confidence in you has not been misplaced. There is no corner of the Shah's heart that is not full of kindness towards you and satisfaction with your conduct.' I also stated that H.M. had directed me to communicate to the troops his thanks for the services they had rendered, and to say : ' I redeemed Azerbijan from the Russians for the sum of eight crores of tomâns, and in consideration of the distinguished services in this campaign of the troops of that province I make the money *Nallol* to them and to their children for ever.'

" H.E. expressed great joy at the receipt of a communication so gratifying, but seemed to be disappointed that there was no message to himself personally. I then related to H.E. the circumstances of the Shah's late illness and the alarm into which the capital had been thrown by the danger in which H.M. had been, and further communicated what I had learnt from private channels

in Teheran—viz., that the Shah, in the extremity of his danger, had prayed to God, acknowledging the many blessings that had been conferred upon him, to prolong his life until the return of Abbas Mirza, that he might hand over the government to him before he died. This affecting circumstance was made known to me upon undoubted authority, and it so affected the Minister that he shed tears copiously, and for some time was unable to speak.

"The Prince had been hunting on the line of march, and did not arrive until it was dark. About ten o'clock at night he sent for me, when I delivered in presence of the Minister the King's messages, and laid before him (after H.E. had taken leave) the proposals of the Ausef ud Dowleh regarding the march to Fars, the occupation of Astrabad, engaging to pay the troops of Astrabad, Bustam, and Semnan instead of paying the revenues of Yezd and Kerman to the Treasury, the removal of the Zil-i-Sooltan, and placing Md. Mirza* in Teheran, the detaining the young Prince of Astrabad with his contingent in Khorassan, etc., etc. H.R.H. said he required time to consider of these matters; that he would not occupy any country without express orders from the Shah; that the arrangement of affairs in Teheran was of primary importance and most difficult to accomplish, but that we should have frequent opportunities to converse over these matters. H.R.H. had arrived in high spirits, having killed two leopards and a quantity of game that day, and the Shah's messages highly gratified him, and even affected him so much that his eyes filled with tears.

"11*th*.—Being a halt, the troops were paraded for the purpose of having delivered to them the Shah's message. I visited the regiments, each drawn up on its own line of arms. They had, of necessity, been irregularly encamped. It was a cold, blowy day with some rain, and the ground was unfavourable for a military display, being

* Son of Abbas Mirza and ultimate heir to the throne.

for the most part broken and uneven, yet the men did look like soldiers. Their dresses were much worn, their accoutrements not well cleaned, their arms rusty. They looked cold, and the ground and weather were both unfavourable, but I examined them with much care and attention. I walked along the line while they were standing at their ease waiting for Md. Mirza, who had been ordered to attend. Their attitudes were firm and bold, and their countenances generally expressed good humour, manliness, and confidence. I requested, as I delivered my message to each regiment, that it might be dismissed, as the weather was bad, and because I think one can judge better of the manner in which they take what they have heard by seeing them go off when dismissed than while they are in line. They almost all scampered off in high spirits, and with a light step and heart, laughing and jesting and running races to their tents. Some old soldiers went off at a steady pace, not inclined to join in the gambols of their younger companions. A few men in each corps complained that they had not received their pay ; but the great majority expressed their readiness to follow the Prince wherever he should lead them, and an old soldier of the Karadaugh Regiment, when I mentioned their having been redeemed from the Russians, called out : ' Sahib, tell the Shah to get officers and discipline his troops, and *inshulla* we'll fight the Russians again.'

" I this day distributed the presents of which I was the bearer from the Envoy. In the morning, when I was preparing them for distribution and had sent some away, Meerza Sadok, nephew of the Kayim Makam, who was acting Vazeer to Md. Mirza Wallee of Khorassan, and had been appointed to attend to my wants and comfort in camp, sent me a message to this effect—that he had been directed by the Prince to attend to my affairs in camp and see that all things were properly conducted ; that I ought not, therefore, to have distributed presents without consulting with him as to what ought to be

given to each individual. I returned for answer that if this message were sent with the concurrence of the Prince, I should wait upon H.R.H. and state personally what I had to say on the subject, and if it were sent without H.R.H.'s knowledge I must consider it as an impertinent interference on the part of Mirza Sadok with matters that did not concern him; that if H.R.H. had so little confidence in me as to consider it necessary to place Mirza Sadok as a spy on my actions, the sooner I took my leave and relieved H.R.H. from all anxiety on this subject the better. The answer returned was that the message delivered to me was altogether a mistake of the man who delivered it. This I knew to be false, for I was quite aware that the man who brought the message, and who was a servant of Mirza Sadok, could never have dared to make such a statement of his own accord. The object of the message probably was to remind me that I ought to send a handsome present to Mirza Sadok. I therefore put aside a tray in which I had laid out some things for him, and distributed all the other presents, packing up again what had been destined for him to be given on some future occasion.

"In the evening the Kayim Makam came to my tent, and we had a long discussion regarding the propriety of moving on Herat without first settling the affairs of Turbut, which I exclaimed against as quite inadmissible, because Herat would be more likely to resist than if Turbut were first subdued. If Herat should even submit, and Md. Khan hold out, the season was too far advanced to turn upon him. If Herat resisted he should be encouraged to hold out and confederate with the Afghans, and Khorassan must continue to be unsettled so long as Mahommed Khan retained his power. If the Prince should receive even a check before Herat, Md. Khan would be up in his rear, and the army would probably be utterly destroyed, because no safe line of retreat would then be open, and if this army should be destroyed the Prince would be ruined beyond hope, for he could not

replace it in many years. On the other hand, the Prince had not men enough to mask Turbut and march to Herat, an expedition which, with undisciplined troops the only part of his army that he could possibly leave behind, was always hazardous, because they were liable to be routed and dispersed by small numbers, and could not be trusted to maintain any position when the weather became inclement—because, in short, their relative strength compared with that of the enemy could never be calculated with any degree of certainty. Besides which the moral effect of leaving a rebellious subject untouched, as if he were too strong to be dealt with, would be extremely injurious, more particularly while the Khans of Tabbas and Kain remained undisturbed masters of their provinces and occupied the whole line of country between Turbut and the Herat frontier—in short, the whole right flank of the proposed base of operations. The troops were fatigued and unpaid. To procure supplies if a siege were to be undertaken at so very advanced a season of the year, with no magazines prepared and no country which could be depended on as friendly within reach, in a year of great scarcity everywhere, would be not only difficult, but perhaps impossible. In short, I conceived it impossible for H.E., weighing deliberately the two propositions, to doubt for a moment the necessity of fully subjugating Khorassan before he should undertake conquests beyond it.

"H.E. was of opinion that the possession of Herat was necessary to the tranquillity of Khorassan. His information left him no room to doubt that it would be surrendered or evacuated as soon as the Prince should appear before it, and felt quite satisfied that Mahommed Khan would have no alternative but to submit as soon as the Prince should be master of Herat, which he considered an easier conquest than the country of Turbut. He was of opinion that all the tribes lying on the frontiers of Khorassan, and which had been in the habit of wasting and disturbing that province, must of necessity submit

as soon as Herat should become a Persian Government, but that so long as they had Herat to lean upon for support they would not discontinue their inroads. That to subjugate Mahommed Khan would not secure the tranquillity of Khorassan nor involve the submission of Herat; but that to reduce Herat would involve the submission of Md. Khan, would reduce the predatory tribes to the necessity of putting themselves under the protection of Persia, and by giving a more imposing character to the Prince's operations would overawe the governments of Khiva and Bokhara. That the Turcomans of Merve and Tejend, as well as those of the Merghaub and the tribes of the Chahar Eimak,* lay open and accessible from the side of Herat along the course of the Merghaub and the Tejend, but were difficult of approach from the side of Persia. That the Khans of Tabbas and Kain were entirely in the interest of the Prince, and would attend him in an expedition against Herat. That, as no attempt would be made to defend that city, which abounded in provisions, the troops would be well supplied and that the money raised there and from the neighbouring country would enable the Prince to pay the army and keep it together as long as he might find it necessary. That if advantage were not taken of the present opportunity to march against Herat and there procure the means of paying the army, it must be sent away unpaid, and therefore discontented, and that it would be difficult to collect it again.

"I did not enter with H.E. on the question of the comparative advantages of preserving or overturning the present government of Herat, because I wished to reserve them for the Prince, on whom they were likely to make a stronger impression. But I told H.E. that, as his whole reasoning rested in the statement that Herat would not be defended, that its submission would involve that of Md. Khan, and that the Arab chiefs were entirely in the

* The Chahar Eimaks are four great tribes—viz., (1) Timuris, (2) Taimanis, (3) Tamshedis, (4) Firozkohis.

Prince's interests, statements (especially the first) of the truth of which I was not assured, I must beg leave to retain my original opinion. After some unimportant conversation H.E. took his leave.

" 13*th*.—We marched about fifteen miles. A cold day with rain and sleet. Encamped at a point from which a path turns off up a valley to the left towards Turbut Shaikh Jam. Through this valley a small stream oozes to join the Meshed River—say twenty miles from Akdurband.

" 14*th*.—Snow fell heavily in the night and all morning. We therefore halted. The troops were uncomfortable and discontented, and feared the Prince was going to carry them to Herat, against which they were prepared to remonstrate unless they were first paid, in which case they were ready to go anywhere.

" 15*th*.—Marched up the valley towards Shaikh Jam, and halted where there was water, firewood, and some grass, with abundance of reeds. A large body of the troops set out on the road to Meshed, and refused to turn off on the road to Turbut. Officers of all descriptions were sent after them. Some were beat and drove back, others they abused with their tongues, and all they disregarded till the arrival of their own Colonels and superior officers, who succeeded after much trouble in inducing most of them to return. It was an anxious day. For some time I feared that the army had broken up.

" The Prince and his attendants this day killed a royal tiger, which was brought into camp.

" In the evening the Kayim Makam sent for me to the tent of Myjif Ali Khan of Bujnurd, and I was surprised to see drawn up near it the Shekaku Regiment, formerly commanded by Captain Christy. After sitting a few moments, H.E. informed me that the Shekakus, hearing of the desertion of some of the Sirbaz and the general feeling of aversion to go to Herat that prevailed in the army, had come forward to express their readiness

to go anywhere the Prince should command them, and H.E. had determined to speak with them. He was desirous that I should accompany him and speak to the men, and I am very glad that I did so, for a more amusing scene I have seldom witnessed. H.E. commenced at the right of the line, and, speaking in bad Turkish, asked them almost one by one whether they were ready to go to Herat. To the first two or three, who expressed their readiness in modest terms, he gave a few piastres, to one for the purpose of buying a cap, to another for boots, to a third because he was smart-looking, cracking a joke on every donation. At length we came to a man who exclaimed aloud that he was not content to go only to Herat; he begged the Prince would lead them to Kandahar, to India and China, that they might have an opportunity of showing their devotion. The Minister hereupon called loudly for gold, and taking a ducat from a very small purse that was handed to him, thrust it into the man's mouth. The exclamations of devotion now became more frequent, and a few more ducats were given; but before we got half through the line everyone was calling out to be led to Herat and Kandahar, and the Minister began to diminish his rewards, giving only a few piastres as at first. Once or twice, while pretending to give piastres, he only gave quarters, but I pointed out his *mistake*, and insisted on piastres. The Sirbaz, leaving their line, now crowded round him, and were clamouring for presents; but order being restored, we went on, the men from the right passing behind the line and extending it to the left, until at length H.E. began to wonder at its length, but, being very short-sighted, he did not perceive the trick, and I prevented some of the attendants from telling him of it. It was not every day that H.E. gave money. He then began to complain of their numbers, and as everyone clamoured to be marched to Herat, and in the same breath complained that his cap or shoes or coat were worn out, H.E. was perplexed. I saw several of the men get

presents two or three times, and I kept a careful eye on H.E., for as his purse got low he began to deal in small coins, and whenever he gave money for any article of dress I insisted on its being sufficient for the purpose, and now and then called on H.E. for gold, and told him that such a one was anxious to go to some place beyond China, and could not be offered less than a ducat. At last H.E. declared his money was expended. I offered to send for more, but this he would not permit, and requested that the regiment might be sent away, which was done by dismissing them, not by marching them off. They therefore crowded about us more than ever, and I lost no opportunity of urging every suit that was preferred for a present. The crowd was so great that we were unable to move. The men would listen to no orders to make way. It was getting dusk. The Minister got alarmed, and begged I would not leave him, at the same time taking firm hold of my arm. Finding that H.E. had really now no more money to give, I proclaimed to the Sirbaz that such was the fact, and that they might therefore go home. From me they believed the statement, and opened a way for us. When H.E. reached his tent he began to reckon up how much he had given, and to his great joy found one ducat remaining in the purse of gold. I was astonished to find that all his donations did not exceed twenty-five or thirty tomâns. I had imagined they were much more. The single ducat that remained I won from H.E. in a wager before leaving him that evening, and insisted on prompt payment, which he could not refuse, as I knew he had the said ducat in his little purse."

On 14th January, 1833, John McNeill returned to Teheran, having endured great hardship while with the troops, but having been entirely successful in restraining the Prince from attacking Herat. The following June Prince Abbas Mirza returned, covered with glory, having temporarily subdued Khorassan. He made a triumphal

entry into the capital, being met by twenty brother Princes clad in armour, the members of the British Mission in full diplomatic uniform, and all the nobles about the Court. The Prince had now so well established his character that no successful opposition was likely to be offered to his succession, but his health was seriously impaired.

The First Class of the Order of the Lion and the Sun was bestowed on John McNeill soon after his return by the Shah.

CHAPTER XIII

A DIFFICULT POSITION

1833—1835

THE public and private events of the years 1833 and 1834 include many deaths. Prince Abbas Mirza died 21st October, 1833; before him Dr. Cormick, who was with him, succumbed. Just a year later Shah Fetteh Ali, after long illness, died on 23rd October. To John and Elizabeth McNeill another daughter was born on 5th January, 1834, called Margaret Ferooza; but the following month the former child, Eliza, died, and in April news came that Hester, the eldest girl, who was in Scotland, had fallen a victim to scarlet fever. She was followed before long by Miss Jane Wilson, who was in delicate health, and whose end was no doubt hastened by her grief over the death of her beloved niece and charge. David Wilson, too, their lifelong friend, whose sojourn at Bushire had undermined his constitution, died in England in September, 1834, and was a very great loss to them.

These losses are in themselves sufficient to account for the great sadness and depression which pervades the letters of these years, but there was additional reason for low spirits. Dr. McNeill's position as First Assistant was daily becoming more difficult. The Envoy was "a man for whose mental qualifications"—to put it in McNeill's own words—"one could feel no deference and for his moral character no respect." The influence of the British Mission, so far as the chief was concerned, was naught. There was "no man of influence about the Court

who had not been insulted or disgusted." The Persians had no confidence in an Envoy whom they "considered too devoid of discretion to be entrusted with a secret and too devoid of truth to be implicitly believed."

The long-promised detachment of officers from India to drill the troops arrived. They consisted of Colonel Passmore, Captain Shiel, Lieutenants Tod, Langton, Farrant, and Rawlinson, Dr. Griffiths, and Ensign Powell. They should have been a source of strength to the influence of the Mission, but, unfortunately, Colonel Passmore and the Envoy were soon scarcely on speaking terms, and further troubles were caused by Major Sir Henry Bethune arriving from England, with no very defined military position and neither under Colonel Passmore nor with an independent command. Through all these disagreeables John McNeill tried by every means in his power to keep peace, to minimize foolish actions and words, and to keep up the prestige of the representative of Great Britain. All, both British and Persians, seem to have had confidence in him, as numerous letters testify. He was in correspondence with every European in Persia and beyond it apparently, and the letters are pleasant reading, as one and all show the esteem and affection in which the writers held him, and also show the marvellous private intelligence department which he thus established. To mention a few of them, there are letters from Captain Burnes, the traveller; Mr. Burgess, a commercial man at Resht; Captain Hennel, at Bushire; Colonel Taylor, engaged in antiquarian research in Bagdad; Captain Shee, from the military camp at Khorassan; Mirza Baba, at Meshed; Mr. Brant, Consul at Trebizond; Mohun Lal* and Dr. Gerrard, at Herat; Captain Lynch, at Shiraz; Mr. Cartwright, Consul-General at Constantinople; and Mr. Baillie Frazer, the traveller who had been sent out

* Later "of Indian celebrity, travelling companion of Burnes, and the man who, amongst all the British prisoners at Cabool, did most to uphold our honour and rescue our countrymen" (Colonel Outram, January 8, 1843).

especially by the British Government to collect information in Persia and report direct to them. The last became a very great friend indeed, and his letters are very numerous.

The death of the Crown Prince caused some anxiety as to whether his son, Mahomed Mirza, or his full brother, the Zil Sooltan, would be chosen as heir. The Court was full of intrigue, and Russia, to whom a crore of tomâns was still due of the war indemnity, hoped to place the weight of her power and influence so that whoever was chosen would appear to owe the throne to her. The diplomatic moves, like a game of chess on the part of Count Simonitch on one side and the British Envoy, urged by John McNeill, on the other, are very fully described in the papers preserved, but are too extensive to quote here. In the end Mahomed Mirza was chosen, with the approval of both Powers.

The Zil Sooltan submitted to his nephew, having been told that the Shah had a dream in which the late King, Aga Mahomed, had appeared to him and ordered him to appoint Mahomed Mirza his heir. The other Princes also submitted quietly, but, distrustful of appearances, and especially of Persian Princes, McNeill thought it safer to send his wife and child home, away from possible danger from disturbances and fighting, on the death of Fetteh Ali Shah. The wife and children of the Envoy also went home, and they decided to go via Constantinople. They left Teheran 1st May, 1834. These extracts from Elizabeth's diary give an account of their journey :

" Left Tabreez on the 4th of June, 1834, in company with Lady Campbell. Mr. Brant acted as our guardian. . . . We reached Khoi in five marches. . . . At Zengireh Mr. Noble, *en route* for India, overtook us with despatches from Teheran. He came on with us to Khoi, and acted a very gallant part in dashing into some deep water which it was impossible for us to cross in our

*tukts** and carrying us over, with the help of one of the Ghoolams, on the *tukt* ladder.

" 13*th*.—Beautiful morning. Passed through a hilly, wild country, and encamped about three and a half hours by the side of a river, but not near any village. Saw several Koords to-day ; are to get a reinforcement to our guard to-morrow. In the evening Suliman Khan sent two Koords as a guard, which was a relief, as the place was lonely and unsafe-looking.

" 14*th*.—Were in sight of the snowy peak of Ararat for most of the way. . . .

" 16*th*.—Went very slowly, as we had to keep with our baggage on account of the Koords, who were said to be in some hundreds awaiting a Persian caravan which they wished to plunder. Halfway all our servants tied shawls round their caps to pass for Turks, as the Koords were said to have declared vengeance against every Persian cap. . . .

" 17*th*.—Here we are to remain, at the request of the Pacha of Bayayeed, and a man is despatched to the rebellious tribe to desire them to give back the merchant's horses (thirty of which they had plundered) and let us pass quietly. . . . This village, the first in Turkey at which we have stopped, is a little fort strongly built of stone, although almost a ruin now, but greatly superior in appearance to a Persian village.

" 19*th*.—Still here, with no certain prospect of being off. Yesterday passed most uncomfortably. A man came in, bringing accounts of the robbery of another large caravan by the Jelalee Koords, said to consist of a thousand loads of merchandise, and stated that several lives on both sides had been lost. The merchant who brought the account had gone on a little in front with ten horses to see if the river at that place was fordable. Some Koords came down, took his horses, and stripped him almost naked. He walked back, and found that his

* *Tuchteraven* = horse-litter, a very uncomfortable means of progression.

companions had fled and all had been plundered. He came over the mountains to this village without shoes or cap. We have got reinforcements to our guard, but are to wait for 150 more. Weather much better to-day, but provisions scarce and bread bad.

"*20th.*—About midnight last night Mr. Brant came to our tents to tell us that Beloch Pacha himself with 200 men had come to escort us, and that we must be ready at four o'clock. . . . About halfway we met them—gaily dressed men sent by the Pacha of Erzeroum. Soon after we were joined by fifty more men, so that altogether we muster about 300 or more men. Encamped at Errak; went in the evening and saw the church, said to be 1,500 years old—a very massive building with an altar done up in the Roman Catholic style. There is a convent of monks close to it, who were kind and sent us provisions. . . .

"*21st.*—Passed over the ground where the robbery of the caravan took place; saw quantities of sugar, paper, and string, etc., strewed about, and two dead bodies of Koords who had fallen in the strife. The Pacha's son joined us on the road with sixty horsemen, and they flew up and down the mountains, brandishing their spears and amusing themselves with firing their pistols into the ground just below their horses' noses. They are famous horsemen, and their spears have a fine effect.

"*27th.*—Arrived at Erzeroon [Erzeroum ?]. The Pacha sent some well-dressed men to meet us. We are well lodged and elegantly fed by Mr. Johns.

"*28th.*—Passed the day quietly. Mrs. Perkins (missionary's wife) came some hours before dinner, and played with the children. She is a nice creature, but speaks American, not English.

"*30th.*—To-day the Pacha sent his carriage and six with a guard of honour to escort us to go out and see the town. Had a very rough ride, as the seat of the carriage gave way! Went to see a Turkish garden; were received in a kiosk or summer-room by the master

of the garden, a very nice-looking man. We got coffee and lemon sherbet, before taking which a man knelt before us and covered our knees with an embroidered towel! In the middle of the room was a very pretty *jet d'eau* of white marble.

"*3rd July*.—Went with Lady C. in the *tukt* to visit the Pacha's ladies. They were gaily dressed, but I was disappointed in the form of their dresses. They wear over their trousers a kind of long robe that swept the ground both behind and before, and when they walked looked awkward and unbecoming. They wore fez caps with different coloured handkerchiefs round them, and many diamond ornaments and flowers, and their hair pulled out in various directions in the form of a *jet d'eau*. We dined with them, and liked the messes tolerably well.

"13*th*.—Came nearly four hours over a tremendous road—high ascents with steep precipices. My *tukt* fell once, and the horses kicked when down more than a mule would have done, but the place was fortunately not near the precipice. Scenery very fine indeed to-day.

"15*th*.—Came into Trebizond."

They remained there for nearly a month, waiting for the ship *Shah*, which took them to Constantinople, where they spent nine days with Mr. and Mrs. Hansen at Therapia, and met Lord and Lady Ponsonby and others. They went on in the same vessel to Malta, paying £300 for the trip.

That Mr. McNeill suffered greatly from the absence of his wife is seen from the following extracts from a diary kept by him:

"1*st May*, 1834.—Elizabeth set out with our poor babe for England. It is right that an attempt should be made to save it at whatever sacrifice to ourselves, but it is neither stouter in frame nor more healthy in appearance than its sisters and brother. How, then, can we expect to see it survive when they have all been taken away? It is right, too, that Elizabeth and our poor Margaret should be out of the country for the present. The state

of the Shah's health has become too precarious, and the probability of a serious commotion on his death has been so much increased by the death of Abbas Mirza that it would not be prudent to have ladies and children here exposed to the possible evils of such times. God give them a prosperous journey! I was unable to accompany them the first stage, as I had at one time intended. Such separations are painful enough at all times, and in our case I felt it too powerfully to attempt taking leave by inches and prolonging the pain for twenty-four hours. It was necessary to do it by a wrench, not by slow tearing. When I reflect on the many chances against our meeting again, and how much these must be increased by prolonging our separation, I sometimes think I do wrong in remaining here to struggle on—for what? For the chance, the distant chance, of one day (if I live) being able to spend a hundred or two more per annum in England than I can do now. Is it better that I should do so? If the only object be the money—it surely is not; but I fear the want of sufficient occupation, or rather excitement, if I retire—or perhaps I fear that I may not play the prominent part at home that is assigned to me here, or that I have not yet satisfied my ambition (who has?) sufficiently to enable me to be quiet and contented in retirement. Certainly I have an undefined feeling of dread that the experiment of retiring may not succeed, that it may not promote my happiness. I am now thirty-nine—may perchance live twenty years more. What am I to do for twenty years? Have I habits of steady application sufficiently firm to enable me to engage in any new pursuit that requires much preparation? I doubt it. I might write a Persian tale or two. When then? I might write articles for magazines, lounge at a club, inhabit a cottage in the country or a small house in town, and I should always be sure of domestic comfort; but would this be sufficient occupation and excitement for perhaps twenty years? I am weary and want rest, but not for ever. . . . My present position is

irksome and disagreeable enough. I can neither stand aloof nor interfere with effect; I can neither direct the affairs of the Mission with advantage nor can I disregard them. Surely the persons who, for private ends, appoint an unfit servant to a situation of trust and responsibility are guilty of a great crime.

"In the evening I talked over my own position with Fraser. It appears to me that I must decide on becoming an accuser, which I cannot persuade myself to be, or I must keep quiet and allow the interests entrusted to the Mission to be sacrificed, or I must retire, so as to induce inquiry. Of these three the last is most disinterested, and the most delicate course. Fraser, Passmore, and Shiel all agree with me in thinking it.

"I have found the house most desolate to-day—so much so that it quite overcame me. My solitary dinner stuck in my throat. . . . If the Medical Retiring Fund should be established, I can follow; if it should not be established—still, why should I not follow? I should even then be independent—£660 a year! Why not? Fraser tells me he lived on less, but then he adds it was too little. So is every man's income. What is enough? 'A little more than one has.' If this is true of all incomes within any limits which concern me, what does it signify where I may stop? It is necessary to be on an equality with one's friends and relations. Well, suppose we are; then comes again the question, 'What is one to do without any occupation for perhaps twenty years?' I cannot make up my mind to commence practising my profession—I am too old and too independent to submit to that—and I cannot hope to find any congenial occupation; but I want rest, and if the Fund is established, I shall retire, unless I am *tempted* to stop or return to work. Who will tempt me?

"30*th May*.—Dined at Hoosein Ali Khan's. The whole of the English gentlemen now in Teheran were there. He received us in his *surdāb*—a pretty room—floor covered thick with rose-leaves. Good dinner, wine, music,

dancing. Drank the Shah's health with three cheers. The Khan and his Persian friends drank the health of the King of England in the same manner, and gave the hip-hip-hurra in very creditable style."

The diary continues full of meditations on Persian affairs, always striving after their betterment, and always taking a high tone and stand for truth, justice, honour, and mercy, but always deploring the state of the present situation, and feeling that it was impossible to continue in it.

There was a general belief throughout Persia that the Shah Fetteh Ali would die during this year—1834, or 1250 of the Hegira. "The prediction was originally uttered by a famous astrologer, and confirmed by a Seyud of great sanctity. The Shah himself many years before had dreamt that a man had brought him a sword or a suit of armour to buy. His Majesty had bargained for it till he had reduced the price from sixty to forty tomâns. The man gave him the armour, but told him that he had shortened his own reign by reducing the price—that he should reign a year for every tomân given. This is the fortieth year of his reign."

John McNeill at length decided to apply for conditional leave—*i.e.*, as it would be months before he could get an answer from Bombay, he asked to be allowed to use his own discretion as to whether the state of Persian affairs was such that he could be spared, and mentioning that he had served seventeen years, and this was his first application for leave. The Envoy seems to have objected to forwarding this request, and it is not clear what ensued; but eventually he formally directed Mr. McNeill to go home via Constantinople, where he was to place himself in communication with the British Ambassador (Lord Ponsonby), and to tell the home authorities in detail the facts that made the Envoy "apprehensive of a direct and entire subversion of British interest in Persia." He was directed to tell no one he was going;

so he rode off at 7 a.m. on 26th September, 1834, without even shaking hands with his friends, but was able to leave his private matters in the hands of Dr. Riach (successor to Dr. Cormick)—a man "whose right feeling and good sense" were quite a comfort to him.

He performed the journey in a most wonderfully short time on horseback all the way to Scutari, which he reached on 13th October, via Khoi, Erzeroum, Amasia, Karajalar, and Boli, being often in the saddle twelve hours at a time, and sometimes riding on by night as well as by day, and throwing himself down on the ground for a few moments' rest while horses were changed. He spent ten days at Constantinople with Lord Ponsonby, with whom he had corresponded, but had not previously met. They had much in common and much to discuss. Mr. McNeill held strongly that the Persian and Turkish questions should be treated, not as two questions, but as one—first, because they "both referred to the position of Russia in the East"; and, second, "if either fell into the hands of Russia, the other could not be maintained in independence." "There ought," he says, "to be concert between our Missions in Turkey and Persia. They ought, in fact, to be labouring to one great end on some given principle." Lord Ponsonby's subsequent frequent letters dwell much on the very great pleasure this meeting was to him, and his hope that the acquaintance would ripen into a strong friendship. One of these letters is now given :

"(*Private.*)

"*29th October*, 1834.

"DEAR MR. MCNEILL,

"I beg you will talk to Mr. Strangways, the Secretary of Embassy. He is a great friend of mine, I hope, and I am sure he is a very sensible man, with a large fund of information. He is brother of Lord Ilchester and Lady Lansdowne. I hope he is not of the foolish click of believers in Russian benevolence and the other nonsensical matters.

"There is nothing new here. Peace, I think, will not be broken by the Sultan. He is too poor a wretch to act, however he may talk. We must take him by the beard when we want him, and he will thank us for the violence we may use. . . .

"I have a multitude of things that I could say, but it would be murder or homicide at least to pour them out upon a weary traveller, and I need not talk to you on the affairs of this country, which you understand better than I do. I confess I despaired of success, because I see such evidence of weakness of character at home. Pray read O'Connell's letter to the people of Ireland! You will find it in the *Times* of 26th September. Ireland will be lost, and O'Connell plainly shows us how—viz., by a timid Government. I shall not, however, give this question up for lost, even though our Government flinches and flees from it. I think an Empire like this is not to be lost in a day, not even by the occupation of Constantinople, though the singular situation of that city makes it doubly the heart and head of the Empire. I will, even after that shall have taken place, look forward with hope to what may be effected by energy, for in the consummation of imbecility which such an event would produce I think might be found the means of giving life to courageous and wise exertion.

"I said, I believe, some lines back that Ireland would be *lost*, but that is not my meaning. Ireland is safe so long as England is necessary to the French Government. And it is the Government will be lost, and the *peace* of Ireland, and much blood eventually spilt there, because weak men believe in the power of O'Connell as they believe in the power of Russia.

"I hope you will remember your promise to write about all possible things, and pray add to it the *quibusdamalii* I am afraid you will see with your own eyes. . . . But I hope you will not spare to tell me the errors you may observe. I will write to you whenever I think anything worthy of your notice either of fact or [of]

argument [which] can be told you, and has not been communicated by Urquhart.

" I will now conclude with begging you to believe that few things have given me so much satisfaction as the *fors fortuna* that produced my becoming acquainted with you. I hope you may allow that acquaintance to ripen into a stronger connection. I know old men cannot acquire friends, and I feel that I am old ; but there are, it is said, exceptions to all rules, and at least there are modifications of most moral ones. I flatter myself there is a large portion of my principles and my motives to action very similar to those by which you seem to me to be governed in such things. Sympathy is a connecting power. May it exert and prove its force !

" I write to Lord Grey to tell him of your arrival in England. I am sure he will be very desirous to see you. Probably you know Sydney Smith. Mr. Fraser may have introduced you to him, if you didn't before know him. He is very intimate with Grey, and would bring you and him together. If you see Smith, tell him I am alive, and always anxious to hear of his prosperity. Would I could see him in the House of Lords, that the Bishops might be saved !

" Believe me to be, dear Dr. McNeill,

" Yours most faithfully,

" Ponsonby."

Mr. McNeill left Constantinople on 23rd October, still riding, and going via Adrianople, Bazardjik, Sophia, and Nissa. He rode into Semlin (Belgrade) at sunset six days later. Here he delivered despatches entrusted to him by Lord Ponsonby to Mr. Rintz, a King's Messenger, and was himself detained ten days in quarantine. He found the confinement very irksome, and his diary is full of weariness at the detention. The quarantine station was practically a prison, no exercise being allowed except in a small courtyard. When the time was nearly over, he pencilled in the old account-book which records this journey :

"In fifteen days I will, please God, once more set foot on British ground. May it be His will that I should acquit myself there, as an honest, upright man, of the duties assigned to me, and that I may have in all things happy, or at least satisfactory, meetings with my many friends!"

From Semlin he drove in an old carriage, apparently a kind of four-wheeled dog-cart which he had bought, and going by Vienna, Ratisbon (in Bavaria), Würzburg, and Frankfort (where he delivered further despatches), he reached Aix on 20th November. There the diary ceases, but we learn from letters that he reached London before 29th November. There is a little note from John Gibson Lockhart, undated, but evidently of this time:

"MY DEAR MCNEILL,

"What joy it will be to you to hear that to the best of my belief your wife and child are well, and both now here—*i.e.*, at Dr. Mower's, 39, St. James's Place, St. James's Street. I have seen Mrs. Mower often, but not for the last three days. It is just possible she may be visiting a friend she spoke of near London, but I think you will find all right at Dr. M.'s. If she is not in town, come and dine here in your old rags, beard and all, at six this afternoon. We are alone, and I should, of course, be too happy to see the lady also if that suits you both."

On receipt of this, he no doubt lost not a moment in hurrying to 39, St. James's Place.

There is nothing in John McNeill's papers to show what course, after all his heart-searchings, he decided to take with regard to the Envoy in Persia, nor is there any document showing when or why Sir John Campbell left Persia. Mr. Baillie Fraser's return from Persia occurred about the same time as that of Mr. McNeill, and as he was in the employ of the Foreign Office in the Turkish Department,* of which Mr. Hammond was head, and which dealt with all matters concerning Russia,

* "Rambling Recollections," Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, p. 55.

Turkey, and Persia, as well as those of Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, and Siam, it seems probable that the truth regarding the Envoy became known through him.

John McNeill had now served for fourteen years at the Court of Persia. He had always been in the confidence of, and a great assistant to, three successive Envoys. He knew far more about Persian politics than any living Briton, and his diplomatic talents seemed to fit him especially for the first position himself. Many of his friends spoke of this probability, and Mirza Abdul Hassan Khan openly said: "Let them make you, who are the well-wisher of both States, and with whom everyone is well pleased, the Envoy, and I can say that even in England they cannot find anyone so much at home and so loyal as you." His reception by Lord Ellenborough, the Duke of Wellington, and other authorities in London was flattering. He was consulted and questioned as a trustworthy authority. It is not surprising, therefore, that he began to hope that, when the new Mission decided upon was formed, he might be asked to accept the leadership of it himself. These scarcely acknowledged hopes were dashed to the ground on 22nd December. At the Board of Control Lord Ellenborough informed him that Mr. Ellis had been nominated as Envoy Extraordinary to Persia, and that the second place was to be offered to a military officer of rank, perhaps a general officer. One wonders if his demeanour or expression showed what a blow this announcement was. All he said was: "I suppose, my lord, the arrangements for the Mission to Persia are such as to leave me entirely at my own disposal." To this Lord Ellenborough replied: "No, I don't know. The Duke of Wellington and myself are both very desirous to find some occupation worthy of your talents and services, which ought not to be lost to the public. You may be assured there is every disposition to do so, but whether in Persia or where I don't yet know." With these somewhat vague professions he had for a time to be content.

There followed more than a year of uncertainty as to the future. The McNeills lived in St. James's Place, apparently in rooms, as letters are dated from three different numbers in that street. Elizabeth, though trying to see her friends cheerfully, and do commissions, such as buying a "bombazine gown and a black silk pelisse" for her sister-in-law, and a "muslin frock made low, and trimmed with black gauze ribbons," for her pretty niece, Anne Wilson, felt, as she said, "a desolation, a feeling of unfitness" for her lot "more painful than all she had yet gone through." The hardships she had been subjected to, the loss of child after child, the absence of peace and certainty in their Persian life, had told upon her severely; and when to these were added the loss of her most-loved sister Jane and, from scarlet fever, of the child Hester, who had passed safely through the dangers common in infancy, and whom, therefore, she had hoped soon to clasp in her arms once more, she felt completely broken down. "May God Almighty help me," she prayed, "to overcome this, and enable me to see clearly the duties that still remain for me to perform!" The babe, Margaret Ferooza, "dear remnant of our sweet flock," was delicate, but survived, and was her mother's most constant care.

John McNeill's time was fully occupied with interviews at the Foreign Office, and in writing articles for the *British and Foreign Review*, the *Quarterly*, etc.; also in preparing for the press his pamphlet, "Progress and Present Position of Russia in the East."

"It was necessary," says Sir Henry Rawlinson, "in the first instance, that the public mind should be aroused before the Government could be either disposed or able to undertake measures involving responsibility for anything like extraordinary expense, and Mr. McNeill accordingly, assisted by David Urquhart, who had just returned from Turkey, and by Baillie Fraser, who had been travelling on a special Mission in Persia, set to work

MARGARET FEROOZA McNEILL.

"Dear remnant of our sweet flock."

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to *write up* the Eastern Question." "Undoubtedly," says Sir Henry in a later article, "the ablest of these papers which have appeared in modern times, and which, from their opportuneness and ability, had exercised the most influence on the public mind, are those which we have placed at the head of the present article. Sir John McNeill, from whose pen they are well known to have proceeded, was especially fitted to guide public opinion on such a matter, uniting as he did to the most perfect familiarity with his subject a sound and accurate judgment, together with the rare advantage of a freedom from political bias as from local prejudice."*

The pamphlet, "Progrès et Position Actuelle de la Russie en l'Orient," which was submitted to Lord Palmerston, and published in French and English anonymously, at his request, caused a sensation, and is reported to have been bought up by agents of the Russian Government to prevent its circulation. A new edition was issued in 1854.

It was eleven years since John McNeill had been in Great Britain. Great changes had in the meantime taken place. King George had been succeeded by King William, who was greatly interested in Eastern matters, and whose death two years later he very greatly deplored. The Reform Bill had passed; steam communication by sea had come into general use—in every way there must have been much to engage the attention of a man whose talents were so diverse and whose interests were so keen and wide. The expedition to examine and survey a proposed route to India by connecting the Mediterranean and Persian Gulf, utilizing the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers, which had been commanded by King William, and which had been carried out by Major-General Chesney, R.A., F.R.S., and Captain Lynch, C.B., and very favourably reported upon by them, was one of John McNeill's special interests. There are many letters from

* From "England and Russia in the East."

General Chesney and Captain Lynch, and also some from Mr. Laird, who undertook to supply suitable steamers to navigate the Euphrates. That this route would have been shorter than the Red Sea route seems certain. In 1856 Sir W. P. Andrew, chairman of the Scinde Railway Company, gives the route and time thus :

	Miles.	Days.	Hours.
London to Trieste, and thence by steamer to Seleucia		8	6
Seleucia to Ja'ber Castle by rail	80	–	3
Ja'ber Castle to Bussorah, by steamer ..	935	3	3
Bussorah to Kurrachee by steamer	940	3	0
		14	12

One of the advantages claimed for this route can be given in John McNeill's own words :

" The Red Sea and Indian Ocean must be navigated with coals brought from England round the Cape, or across Egypt, or brought from Calcutta at an expense almost equal. Vessels must be freighted to carry and lay down these coals at various points on the steamers' course. The supply of fuel has on several occasions been found inadequate, and it has more than once been in contemplation to lay up the steamer and abandon this line of communication, the expense of which had been found to be so great. To find a cheaper line is, therefore, the great desideratum, and this the Euphrates promises, from Captain Chesney's account of it, to afford. The whole course of the river supplies abundance of fuel of various kinds, particularly wood and charcoal, on very moderate terms, and experiments which have been conducted on a small scale by Captain Chesney and his friends at Bagdad, and subsequently by Mr. Lynch, of the Indian Navy, at Tabreez, have left no doubt on the minds of the persons who have witnessed them that naphtha, both solid and liquid, may be used with the greatest advantage in combination with charcoal as a fuel for steam-vessels. Of this article there are inexhaustible supplies on the Euphrates, and it may be con-

fidently asserted that a vessel navigating that river might be left entirely to her own resources for fuel and provisions, which are everywhere procurable."

Mr. McNeill's great interest and assistance are acknowledged in General Chesney's Life, which was written by his widow, and published in 1885, thus : " Mr. (afterwards Sir) John McNeill not only then (1832), but at subsequent periods, gave him material assistance." In the Preface she says :

" Foreign Powers objected to an enterprise which must necessarily augment British influence in the East, and supply English troops with a short alternative route to India, and the Foreign Office, not usually the strongest of our Government Departments, dare not traverse the wishes of Russia and France. Time has fully justified both Chesney's prophecies and the wisdom of the obstructing Powers. A railway through Syria to the head of the Persian Gulf, connected by a short sea voyage with Kurrachee, meant English supremacy in Hither Asia, a gradual process of civilization and extended commerce, the development of internal resources and the introduction of Western progress in the fossilized provinces of Asiatic Turkey and Persia ; it meant a firm Persian alliance and the holding of both gates of Afghanistan. Here was the rank offence. No other objection could be found. The road was easy, money was ready, engineers and financiers were agreed in their approval of the line. But the Euphrates route was another name for the ascendancy of England in Western Asia, and that was politically inadmissible. And so the project has remained a project, and Russia is now before Herat, where England would have been had Chesney's enterprise been carried to completion."

There is a note of thanks from the Royal Asiatic Society for his " valuable donation of a series of religious works in Persian and Arabic, being the first of those

printed at the press established by Abbas Mirza at Teheran" (nine volumes). There are also letters showing his great generosity to different relations and others in pecuniary difficulties. One letter tells of his obtaining suddenly a fortnight's leave of absence from London, and going off to Colonsay; but there are no letters to show how he found his parents, or of their delight at seeing him again. A story is still, however, told in the island that his bedroom was entirely carpeted with moss from the woods and decorated most beautifully by his mother in sign of welcome.

On 10th February, 1835, the Duke of Wellington, Foreign Secretary, sent for him, and proposed to him that he should accompany Mr. Ellis to Persia as Secretary to the Embassy, with a salary of £1,200 a year, and with dormant credentials of Minister Plenipotentiary. It was impossible for the Duke to give him any assurances of future advancement in the King's Diplomatic Service, "for," said His Grace, "you know I am here during His Majesty's pleasure. I advise you to go out now, but not to resign the Company's service until you see how you get on in the King's, and how matters stand here"—*i.e.*, what party gets into power. Though he had previously refused the Secretaryship, McNeill now replied that his services were at His Grace's disposal. It was, therefore, arranged that he should start in about a month. A change of Government took place, Lord Palmerston succeeding the Duke. He decided in July that Mr. McNeill was not to go with Mr. Ellis, but to follow him later.

Lord William Bentinck, Governor-General of India, had spoken to Colonel Burnes in very high terms of Mr. McNeill, and Lord Auckland, who was nominated to succeed Lord William, sought an interview to discuss the affairs of the East. Lord Mahon and Lord Lansdowne also asked for interviews, and other public men—in fact, there is little doubt that during his lengthy stay in London John McNeill's personality and ability impressed themselves more and more upon the men in power, and

he gained their confidence. The poor and little-known Medical Assistant had developed into a prominent diplomat, whose opinions were listened to with attention, and whose rôle it would be in future to confer favours rather than to receive them.

The Government finally decided he was to go out to Persia, not as Secretary, but as successor to Mr. Ellis, with the rank of Envoy Extraordinary ; also that he and Mr. Fraser were to draw up a memorandum of instructions indicating the policy it would be best to pursue in that country.

He had a good deal of correspondence, and no doubt some interviews, with Sir Herbert Taylor, Private Secretary to King William IV. In December he had an interview with the King, to whom he submitted two maps he had prepared of Persia, and to whom also he fully explained his views. His Majesty was much interested, and requested that the maps might be mounted in cases and sent to St. James's Palace.

Mr. McNeill retired from the East India Company's service on 11th June, 1836, on Captain's full pay of 10s. 6d. a day.

During his stay in England he had become a member of the Athenæum Club. In May, 1840, he was made a member of the Council of the Royal Geographical Society.

CHAPTER XIV

FIRST YEARS AS ENVOY

1836, 1837

On 5th June, 1836, John McNeill started for Persia as "Minister Plenipotentiary and Envoy Extraordinary from the Court of St. James to the Shah of Persia," at a salary of £6,000, and with an allowance of £2,000 for outfit; the other members of the Mission being Captain Sheil, Secretary to Legation; Dr. James P. Riach, First Medical Officer; Dr. Charles W. Bell, Surgeon to the Mission; Captain R. D. H. Macdonald, Commander of the Escort; Captain Charles Stoddart, Military Secretary; a Persian secretary and a Persian treasurer, all of whom were already in Persia. He was unaccompanied, except by a nephew, Robert Wilson. His wife and child remained in Scotland.

He was himself not very hopeful of the outlook. Writing to Sir Harford Jones, he said:

"God help us all, and be merciful to the unfortunate country we are going to! I have no heart for this journey. My fears are many and my hopes are few. . . . I much fear that the grass of Sooltanieh and the two Oojans is destined to feed Cossack horses, and the wine of Shiraz to furnish for a Russian guard-house, even in our own time. You led the way, and a few have done their best to follow, even at a respectful distance; but the tide of events has flowed onwards with too strong a wave to be opposed by our *unaided* exertions, however zealous or devoted, and when the Russian trumpets sound to arms at Herat and Russian *Te Deums* are sung in St. Sophia's, those who now pass away from the con-

sideration of one at least, if not of both these probabilities, will look round for the means of remedying the calamity, and will not find them."

Others had, however, more hope, and based their confidence on the personality of the new Envoy. To quote a few of many such expressions, Lord Ponsonby wrote: "If anybody can beat down the influence Russia seems to have gained over the Shah, it will be you." Captain Powlett Cameron wrote from Persia: "Another thing is, Russia has got rid of her greatest dread (yourself), and now works unchecked and uncontrolled." Sir John Hobhouse wrote: "McNeill is now off, and I hope will put all to rights. . . . He goes with advantages and powers that none ever had before him, and I believe he is the man to make use of them." Colonel (afterwards Sir George) Chesney, 31st October, 1836, wrote: "I trust in God that you are getting on well, and that brilliant success in proportion to the great difficulties awaits you. I feel the deepest interest for one who must rescue Persia if any man can do it." Baillie Fraser writes: "You have a fearful task before you, but I know that you bring to it a firm and resolute mind, zeal tempered with judgment, clear views, a just and honest cause, and greater personal experience and influence than any other individual existing would do, and therefore I do not despair, but imitate your own maxim—not to form any opinion till your own eyes shall have seen and ears heard the true state of affairs."

Nor was it only public men from whom he gained confidence and respect. His wife's nephew, Willie Wilson (at this time a cadet in the Madras Corps), writing to his father, and anxious to go to Persia, says: "How sorry I am that I missed him when he was at home, for if there is one person whom, after my parents, I love and look up to, that person is John McNeill!" All the letters from Persia testify with remarkable unanimity to the personal pleasure his return gave.

The instructions he received from the Minister for Foreign Affairs were :

" To confer with His Majesty's Ambassador to the Sublime Porte on the means of procuring an adjustment of such differences as may exist between the Turkish and Persian Governments :

" To take the earliest favourable opportunity of entering on the negotiations with the Persian Government of the Commercial Treaty and the modification of the Political Treaty :

" To discourage all ambitious schemes of foreign conquest, and to direct the attention of the Shah and his Ministers to the necessity of ameliorating the internal conditions of the nation :

" To urge the paying off of the debt to Russia :

" To offer mediation between Persia and Afghanistan :

" To protect Poles who might make their escape into Persia :

" To hold language with Russia that England concurs with her in preserving the independence of Persia :

" To correspond with His Majesty's Ambassador in St. Petersburg and Constantinople, with the Governor-General of India, and with the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors."

One thousand pounds was allowed for presents to Ministers when treaty or treaties were concluded.

Of the journey through Europe towards Constantinople a very full diary was kept for his wife. It was a great contrast to the hurried ride home, with its physical hardships and mental anxieties, when his mind was torn with doubts as to his reception and as to his duty. The first little incident was characteristic of the man. As he was embarking at Dover he heard some guns firing, and criticized the irregularity of their practice, but quite forgetting that they were the usual salute to one of His Majesty's Ministers leaving the country, and were therefore fired in his own honour. The first act on reaching

Boulogne was to " ferret out " an old Indian friend who was living there after being ruined by bank failures, and for whom he had been making efforts in London. The Envoy and his nephew then started in their own travelling carriage.

In Paris they made a week's stay ; went to the Opera, greatly admiring the dancing of Madame Leroux and another, but too proud to own that he did not understand the playbill, and so could not learn the dancer's name. They went to the Diplomatic Chamber of the Tribune, and heard an interesting debate on Algiers, which seems to have been easier to understand than the playbill. He dined at Lord Granville's, and was taken for a Frenchman by Lady Anne Baird. Basil Hall, the traveller, called upon him, as did also the Polish Prince Adam Czartoryski.* Thought Madame Vaudreuil (wife of the Chargé d'Affaires in England during the French Revolution) " the most talented woman " he had ever met.

Their next stop was at Munich, where he met at Lord Erskine's, the Ambassador's, Prince Mauvrocordato, the friend of Lord Byron, and Envoy of King Otto of Greece to the Court of Bavaria. He greatly admired Miss Jane Erskine, the Ambassador's daughter, saying that she was very beautiful and quite unaffected, and that she had made considerable sensation in London the winter before.

The next stay was at Vienna, where they met Mr. and Lady Augusta Fox, Sir Minto Farquhar, and were especially delighted to meet Baron von Hammer de Pugstal, the well-known Orientalist, who " entered the room making his pretty speeches in Persian." With the Baron John McNeill examined ancient Oriental manuscripts in the library, and with him, too, he went for rambles near Vienna. " All the time we were running over the hills we were discussing Eastern literary matters and spouting

* Intimate friend of Czar Alexander I., and for a short time his Foreign Minister.

Persian poetry. Fortunately, there was no one within hearing, or they must certainly have thought us mad." They also met Baron Jaquin, Professor of Botany, who showed "the most extraordinary thing, the electric telegraph." This, John McNeill says, Baron Jaquin and his friend, the Professor of Natural Philosophy, "aided and incited by Baron Steylitz, of the Russian Mission here, have brought to such a degree of perfection that the young ladies of the Baron's family amuse themselves by transmitting messages at a distance of 13,000 or 14,000 feet from one house to another!" "This simple contrivance, which appears to be quite effectual, is a Russian invention. . . . I have no doubt that the time will come when this telegraph will be in general use."

He attended a soirée at Prince Metternich's, finding him and the Princess surrounded by Carlists. Of the Prince he says: "He is fond of good stories, tells them well, and evidently has great pleasure at hearing himself speak; is very impatient of any contradiction, or even of the expression of an opinion at variance with his own. . . . He struck me to be singularly ignorant of England, its politics, parties, etc." Of the Princess he says: "She is handsome, haughty, bold, and clever; of low birth and high pretensions, a fierce Carlist, and a foul-tongued woman; but, on the other hand, she is said to be charitable and kind to the poor, and to make an excellent stepmother."

From Vienna they sent the carriage back, and went on by steamer. Prince Scwatzenberg, a prominent Hungarian, joined the steamer at Pressburg. John McNeill describes him as a remarkable man, whose information, talents, extent of travels, enlargement of views, make him an object of great interest. The next interesting meeting was with Count Zechenzie at Orsova, "who seems to be the chief promoter of every scheme which has for its object the improvement of his native country." At Semlin they visited the quarantine station where John McNeill had suffered his long and lonely imprisonment,

and, curiously, he found there a cousin of his great friend in London, Mr. John Paget, and was able to provide him with some necessary comforts.

Of the rest of the journey there is nothing special to record. In due time he met Mr. Ellis, the retiring Envoy, at Bayazede, a place just inside the Turkish border. At Zingan Mahomed Khan Doomballee was waiting to receive him on behalf of the young Shah, with a present of a fine horse and with many fine speeches. He arrived at Teheran at the end of September.

Mr. McNeill returned to a country in which many changes had taken place during his short absence. The old Shah had died, and his grandson, Mahomed Mirza, reigned in his stead. All the men in influential positions and those formerly about the Court had been dismissed. The Kaim Makam had been put to death, and an entirely new set of Councillors were in power, the chief of them being Hadjee Mirza Agasee, Prime Minister, formerly tutor to Mahomed Mirza, and Mirza Masood, Minister of Foreign Affairs. Both these Ministers were pro-Russian in their policy. Mr. McNeill wrote a few months later :

" Nothing has struck me more forcibly since my return to Persia than the evidence I everywhere find of the increase of Russian influence over the Government since I was formerly here, and the almost unaccountable decline of our own. But while this is true in respect of the Government, it is not so with the nation at large."

The Shah was away with his army in Khorassan (the province next to Afghanistan) when Mr. McNeill arrived, and the Prime Minister wrote to Mr. McNeill's Mehmandar that His Majesty was unwilling to give the Envoy the trouble of going to camp, as he was about to return to Teheran. To others, however, the Shah announced his determination to proceed to Herat. Mr. McNeill " readily acquiesced in the desire " that he should remain at Teheran, because he felt that he " would rather enter on the discharge of his duties " when the campaign, which

could not be successful, was over, as he would thus avoid an " unnecessary display of opposition," and not have to speak on the subject of Herat till he had an opportunity of availing himself of the former feeling of friendship which subsisted between His Majesty and himself. He therefore remained quietly at Teheran.

One of the persons most glad to welcome the new Envoy, an old friend, was the Taj ud Dowleh, favourite and devoted wife of the late Shah Fetteh Ali. Of her John McNeill wrote to his wife :

" The Taj ud Dowleh has been very polite, and wrote me a very touching note. . . . Her conduct since the death of the Shah has been admirable, and has extorted praises from her former enemies. Some curious proofs of the late Shah's confidence in and attachment to her have come to light. The 10,000 tomâns which the Shah received from Sir John Macdonald were given over by His Majesty to the Taj to enable her to go to Mecca when she should have lost him, and the bags were marked to that effect in the Shah's own hand. Another sum of 2,000 tomâns, given by Sir John Campbell, was placed in her hands, with a memorandum requesting that if no one else would take the trouble to inter his body, she would spend this sum in having it decently reposited at Kow. Was there ever anything more melancholy or more touching than this from a King who had so many children ? The Shah expired with his head on the Taj's lap, having just finished his evening prayer. He died without pain, and for some time it was thought he had only fainted. The Taj washed and laid out the body, and remained day and night in the room. Several attacks were made on the house to plunder jewellery. Almost everyone deserted her. She has rejected with scorn proposals of remarriage, delivered up all jewels unasked, and did all in her power to promote the success of the young Shah, because it was Fetteh Ali's wish. I met her at her son's house. She wept and spoke in a most feeling manner, and at length

said : ' You know my origin ; you know that I have no powerful relations whose protection I can hope for. I put myself and my children in your hands. Consider us as your own ; guide us with your counsel and protect us with your influence. I put in you the most perfect confidence. I have known you long, and know that I can trust you. Neither I nor any of my children will ever deviate from the instructions you may give us. You know what my position was and what my rank still is, and you know my sentiments in respect to him who is gone. I have only one condition to make : it must not be proposed to me to form any new connection. If I had been disposed to do so, I need not have wanted a protector, and a powerful one ; but my heart will not consent. My husband is in the grave, but he is still my husband. He respected you, and you served him faithfully. I therefore, for his sake, expect you not to deny my request.' I did not deny it."

In another letter to his wife he tells the following incident :

" Still no news from the Camp, my best beloved, and we are left in the greatest doubt as to the result. In the meantime our Mullahs here have been fighting, and at one time about 2,000 men were engaged in the row. Fortunately, no lives have been lost, and all is now quiet. People in this quarter of the town obeyed me, and did not join in the fray. The Russian Minister, though he lives in the Citadel, was in great alarm, and kept sending messages about all day. I remained perfectly quiet, but on my guard, and as soon as the people had been dispersed both parties applied to me to devise some terms of accommodation, which I did, and which have been agreed to."

It was not till 11th December, 1836, that His Excellency John McNeill presented his credentials to Shah Mahomed Mirza at his first audience.

When Mr. McNeill began his work as Envoy, the Eastern Question was so complicated as to require great insight to grasp all its phases, and great deliberation and caution in dealing with any Eastern ruler. Mehemet Ali, conqueror of Egypt and Syria, was endeavouring to throw off the yoke of the Sultan of Turkey. Russia was looking greedily towards Constantinople. She sent an army to conquer Circassia ; she meditated an attack on Khiva and Bokhara, had sent secret emissaries to Cabul and Kandahar, and had immensely strengthened her position in Persia. There were also the usual small warfares on Turko-Persian, Arab, and other borders. Mr. McNeill had the advantage of constant correspondence with Lord Ponsonby, Ambassador at Constantinople ; Lord Auckland, Governor-General of India ; and with Lord Palmerston at the Foreign Office ; but the exchange of information and opinions was necessarily slow, being all by mounted messenger over great distances. Sixty-three days from London to Bombay was considered extraordinarily quick. One correspondent, speaking of the opening of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers as a route between Europe and India, exclaimed at the absurdity of wishing for anything faster than they had already.

Mr. McNeill also corresponded frequently with Captain (afterwards Sir Alexander) Burnes and his Assistant, Captain Leech, who were sent from India to those nations bordering on the Indus to arrange for the reopening of that river to navigation and commerce ; with Lieutenant Eldred Pottinger, who was in the city of Herat ; with Colonel Hennell, at Bushire ; and Dr. MacKenzie, at Bagdad. He had upon his own staff Colonel (afterwards Sir Justin) Sheil, whom he sent to England to the Foreign Office, " because things have become so complicated that I despaired of making them intelligible by writing "; also Colonel Stoddart (afterwards imprisoned and murdered at Bokhara), whom he sent with the Shah when that Sovereign at length proceeded on his long-desired expedition against Kamran Shah of Herat ; Captain

D'Arcy Todd, whom he sent to travel, nominally for pleasure, in Geelan to report upon it, and subsequently sent to Simla to explain matters to Lord Auckland and the Government in Council; Colonel (afterwards Sir Henry) Rawlinson, who was stationed in Kermanshah, afterwards at Kandahar, and sent constant information from both places; Dr. Riach and Colonel Macintosh, who travelled in Russian territory, nominally for health and pleasure, really to collect information. Besides these, he kept in touch by writing with traders, missionaries, travellers, and encouraged them all to observe and listen and keep him informed.

Almost all the letters during 1836-7-8 have been kept, and make a mass of papers by no means easy to digest. The tone of the whole correspondence is singularly delightful: these men so evidently trust him absolutely, admire his ability, seek his counsel, and take great pains to please him and be of use to the cause. On his side there is kindliness, encouragement, thoughtfulness, and, while never unnecessarily blaming them, he nevertheless, when it is needful, reproves without hesitation, always placing their duty to the interests of their country first, and cautioning the hasty or indiscreet to remember that the good name of England in Persia is dependent on their words and actions.

Afghanistan was at that time divided into three States. Kamran Shah reigned at Herat; Dost Mohammed and Kohendil Khan ruled respectively in Cabul and Kandahar. In the time of the ancient Suffavean dynasty Herat and Kandahar had formed part of Persia, and since the present Shah's father, the late Prince Abbas Mirza's successful expedition in Khorassan in 1833-34, a small tribute had been paid by Kamran Shah, without, however, directly acknowledging the sovereignty of Persia. On that occasion, too, he had undertaken to raze the fort of Ghorian, on the border between Khorassan and Herat, to return certain slaves to their domicile in Persia, and to pay 10,000 tomâns. These promises he

had failed to fulfil, so Shah Mahomed Mirza was justified in marching an army against him. By the Article IX. of the Treaty of Teheran of 1814, the English Government had undertaken not to interfere with either party if war should be declared between Afghanistan and Persia, unless their mediation to effect a peace should be solicited by both parties.

Mr. Ellis wrote to Lord Palmerston :

" We have hitherto been singularly negligent of all the countries between the Caspian and India excepting Persia, and we seem to have relied upon the obligation incurred by Persia in the Treaty of Teheran to resist the approach to India of an invading army " (Article I. of the above-mentioned treaty).

Later he writes :

" The British Government can no longer, with safety to its possessions in India, refrain from intimate connection with the Afghans, whether they be subject to one chief or be divided into principalities."

Shah Mahomed Mirza's first attempt to regain Western Afghanistan, which was made directly after his accession and while Mr. McNeill was in England, ended in ignominious failure. His undisciplined, ill-fed, ill-paid army was obliged to retreat before marauding Turcoman tribes ere it had reached the boundaries at all. Count Simonitch, the Russian Envoy, supported the Shah in his ambitious designs to add Herat to his dominions, because the Count felt that either the success or failure of the expedition must be advantageous to his Government. If Herat was annexed, Russia could, according to her Commercial Treaty, place a resident Consular Agent in the city, who could hoist the Russian flag at his residence, and push his researches, avowed and secret, throughout Afghanistan. If the expedition failed, the effect would be a weakening of the Government of Persia and its increasing dependence on Russia. Count Simonitch also perceived that the question of

Herat was one by which, for the first time, Russia and Persia were placed in accord in opposition to England. The danger to England of the conquest of Herat by Persia lay in the disturbance such an event would cause in her Indian possessions. "No event," writes Mr. McNeill, "is more likely to unsettle the public mind and disturb the tranquillity of the North-West Province."

It must be remembered that by steamer up the Gulf and then through Persia was then an ordinary route from India to Europe; that the Valley of the Indus did not then form part of British India; that Peshawar was not on British territory, but was a bone of contention between Dost Mohammed of Cabul and Runjeet Singh, the Sikh ruler of Lahore. All the Central Asian rulers dreaded Russian tyranny, but if they saw Russia supporting Persia with men and money, and England only feebly remonstrating, they naturally concluded that the wisest course was to ally themselves with what seemed the stronger, richer, and more energetic Power.

For the first few months Mr. McNeill appeared to be very successful, and he was able to send very hopeful reports to Lord Palmerston. Writing from the Foreign Office on 2nd July, 1837, Lord Palmerston says:

"Nothing can be more satisfactory than your reports, and we are delighted to see that British influence is beginning to take its proper place in the Persian Court. We fully appreciate all the difficulties you have to contend with in your struggle against Russia, but your perseverance and judgment will no doubt prevail.

In the following letter to his wife there is evidence of the Shah's personal friendliness:

"We had a grand entertainment here on 23rd April, St. George's Day. Illuminations, transparencies, fireworks, bands, Persian and Russian, and all the magnates of the land to dine. We sat down thirty to dinner—Persians, Russians, Germans, etc., besides English, and parted at four o'clock next morning—*all* sober. The thing

went off uncommonly well; there was no wind to blow out our lamps; Mr. Lewis made very good transparencies, and everybody was in good humour: old Fatty enjoyed himself particularly. Just before we sat down to dinner, when all the company had collected, one of the Shah's confidential people walked in and quite unexpectedly presented me with His Majesty's portrait set in diamonds. Neither I nor anyone present had the smallest idea that such a thing was intended. The occasion was admirably selected, and the compliment beautifully paid."

In November, 1836, Mr. McNeill had written to Lord Auckland expressing his views as to the importance of making friends with Dost Mohammed, and suggesting that an offer to mediate between him and his warlike and harassing Sikh neighbour would probably be welcome to him. Dost Mohammed, "the one strong man in a blatant land," the ruler whose "masterful sway over an unruly people gave sure pledge of his power to guard the main outworks of our Indian Empire towards the west."* Mr. McNeill urged haste in "obtaining some footing in Afghanistan, and especially in Cabul, before Russia shall have obtained the means of disputing it with us." If the Governor-General had acted upon this suggestion, much that was afterwards to cause trouble might have been avoided; but, unfortunately, Lord Auckland awoke to the danger too late, and wrote recommending delay and remonstrance only, as will be seen from the following letter:

"CALCUTTA,
"*15th September*, 1837.

"By our last accounts Runjeet Singh had withdrawn his main army from Peshawar, leaving a sufficient force for defence, and has consulted our Political Agent upon the terms of peace which he should tender to Dost Mohammed. Our answer has been to the effect that national differences were generally best determined without the interposition of third parties, that we were satisfied of his moderation,

* "Lord Auckland," Ruler of Persia Series, p. 45, by Trotter.

and that if he should desire it, Captain Burnes should be instructed to convey from him any reasonable proposition to the Ruler of Cabul. Our last letters from Captain Burnes left him advancing towards the frontiers. He had received one most cordial and another less cordial letter from Dost Mohammed, the letter being written after the announcement of the near approach of a Vakeel from the Shah of Persia, accompanied, as was supposed, by a member of the Candahar family, and announcing the expedition also of a Mission from Bokhara. All this has given us reason for apprehension that Dost Mohammed will once more lose all moderation in his views, and postpone all chance of pacific settlement in these countries, and possibly hasten his own destruction. We have instructed Captain Burnes to point out to him the worthlessness of all promises of military or pecuniary aid from Persia, and the danger of his present position, and the impossibility of our good offices being continued to one whose only object it seems to be to collect means of disturbance, and, indeed, at once to state that we can admit no right of Persian interference on that frontier. To Runjeet Singh we have pointed out the consequences of driving the Afghans to desperation, in the collection of new enemies to the Sikh power upon his frontier, and to him also we have preached peace and moderation. Whether we will succeed with either party remains to be seen, probably not with Dost Mohammed. Yet if Runjeet Singh would consent to admit one of the Cabul brothers to the administration of Peshawar, and otherwise leave Dost Mohammed in tranquillity, even upon some promise of tributary acknowledgment, he would be wrong to refuse such terms, and in the end would probably repent their rejection. In the consideration of all these questions, you will bear in mind that the Sikhs are always our first friends and most steadfast allies. . . . I can have no objection to your using towards the Government of Persia the strongest language of remonstrance upon the waste of all the resources which should be husbanded

for useful purposes, and their application to the fomenting of intrigue and the disturbance of tranquillity upon the Indian frontier, but you must be able to take a much better measure of the effect of such a remonstrance, and particularly in regard to your own position, than I can. You found the British tenure of influence in Persia weak and uncertain, and though the tactics of Persian politics are of unlimited and almost of unnecessary duplicity, I conceive your position to have been much improved since your arrival, and I almost hope that it may be strong enough to justify you in entering upon the frankest exposition of the measures which may strengthen or which must lead to the dissolution of British and Persian alliance. If the game of Persia is not one of the veriest fraud, and if you confidently feel yourself to be gaining in strength, you might be wrong in too immediately and too harshly taking this step, and it may be better for a time to play with events; but if, whilst you are felt to be the last prop of the Shah's tottering independence, there is yet a disposition, partly in misdirected ambition and partly in timid servility to Russian influence, to try how much you will bear of direct injury to the interests of your country, the higher tone of remonstrance can hardly be too soon put to the test. Upon these points and upon the general politics of the countries to the eastward of Persia, I trust that in a few weeks or months I shall be able to write to you more explicitly.

"Most truly yours, sir,

"AUCKLAND."

When Captain Burnes reached Cabul, he was exceedingly well received by Dost Mohammed, and that monarch would willingly have declined to ally himself with Persia if Captain Burnes could, in the name of England, have definitely promised his support. While the latter was at Cabul, Dost Mohammed received a letter from his agent (Hajee Ibrahim) at Teheran, enclosing a friendly note from Count Simonitch, and adding:

"The Shah has directed me to inform you that he will shortly send an Elchee [Envoy], who, after meeting you, will proceed to Runjeet Singh to explain to him, on the part of the Shah, that if he (Runjeet) will not restore all the Afghan countries [in which Peshawar was included] to you, he must be prepared to receive the Persian army. When the Shah has taken Herat, he has promised to send you money and any troops you want. The Russian Ambassador, who is always with the Shah, had sent you a letter, which I also enclose. The substance of his verbal message to you is that if the Shah does everything you wish, so much the better, and if not, the Russian Government will furnish you with everything wanting. The object of the Russian Elchee by this message is to have a road to the English [India], and for this they are very anxious."

This letter was received at Cabul in November, 1837, and a month later Count Vicovitch arrived at Cabul with presents and a further letter from Count Simonitch. There also arrived at Cabul emissaries from the brother-chiefs of Kandahar, whose statement was to the effect that—

"Russia had full influence in Persia, and that they [the Ameers of Cabul and Kandahar] should assist the Shah and draw on him for money, and if their drafts were not paid, that the Russian Government would be responsible for their discharge, but that they would follow the wishes of Mahomed Shah if they sought the Emperor's good offices, and on no account ally themselves with the English Nation."

Captain Burnes was a most able man of strong character. He had been in Persia and knew John McNeill; they were both immensely interested in Central Asian matters, and constantly exchanged letters about them. When he found this state of things at Cabul, he took upon himself to exceed his instructions, which were merely

as to commercial intercourse, and to hold out definite hopes to Dost Mohammed that the Indian Government would arrange matters between him and Runjeet Singh, and would also protect him against Persia and Russia. Mr. McNeill's wish was that Afghanistan should be united under Dost Mohammed, whom he considered more likely to rule well and be loyal to an English alliance than either Kamran or Shah Shooja ool Moolk.

The attitude of the Home Government is well shown in the following letter from Mr. Baillie Fraser :

" Regarding the state of opinion on the Eastern Question among the members of the Government, which must be most interesting to you, I wish I could give you any encouraging news. I am persuaded from my conversations with Sir John Hobhouse and Lord Palmerston that there is no idea whatever of acting with more vigour than heretofore. The truth is, they dare not. They are still obviously divided in opinion, and the party that would advocate more decided measures have not only their own colleagues to oppose, but the fear of a loss of popularity from sounding any note that approaches the tone of war . . . and are forced to continue the same temporizing and vacillating policy which has brought us where we now are. . . . His [Sir J. Hobhouse] language was rather what I would have expected from Lord Durham than himself. He complained impatiently of one party urging the Government on to war with Russia, when it was neither prepared for it nor likely to be supported in the smallest warlike demonstration by the national voice, while another party deprecated breaking with Russia " (27th June, 1837).

It would be wearisome to recount the long negotiations, the letters, the interviews, the perpetual wariness and watchfulness, the cautious inquiry and careful diplomacy which Mr. McNeill used and exercised in his endeavour to do the impossible ; and yet one would wish to show how, day and night, he thought, and planned,

and devised, and worked, regardless of his own health or any personal considerations, to bring about the desired peace between Kamran Shah and Mahomed Mirza Shah, and to restore England's lost prestige. The following letter from Mr. McNeill to Lord Auckland, dated Teheran, 5th March, 1838, gives a résumé of the whole up to the time when Mr. McNeill definitely asked for military aid to back up his remonstrances in the form of a very small expedition to occupy the island of Karrack, in the Persian Gulf:

"When the Shah mounted the throne, the ease with which he overcame the opposition of his grandfather's numerous family appeared to the surrounding nations, who were ignorant of the support he received from England and Russia, to indicate great energy and power in the Shah himself, and the subsequent seizure and execution of the Kaim Makam secured to them an additional evidence of vigour and determination. At the same time, the general belief that Futteh Ali Shah had bequeathed immense treasure to his successor seemed to promise a golden harvest to all those who should secure his favour or render him service. Influenced by these considerations, all the neighbouring Asiatic States sent Missions to his Court, either to deprecate his resentment or to court his alliance or protection. Of these the most urgent and conspicuous were Dost Mohammed Khan and his brother of Candahar. The Shah, having suddenly emerged from insignificance to power, found himself in a position which seemed to enable him to dictate to all Central Asia, and, having formerly failed in an attempt to take Herat, the alliance or allegiance of the other Afghan chiefs held out the prospect of an easy conquest over Kamran. Russia artfully fomented his desire to attack Herat, and in doing so succeeded in persuading him that she had no other object than the advancement of his interests, while she warned him that England would oppose his views, and bade him note the hollow

character of her friendship, which was, in fact, no more than a desire to serve herself at his expense. Having incited the Shah's mind with the hope of conquest and military renown, which are his ruling passions, she gradually developed her own views in seeking the aggrandisement of Persia on the side of Afghanistan, and displayed to him a community of interests between Persia and Russia and an opposition of interests between Persia and England, which has continued to influence the Shah's whole conduct ever since he began to appreciate it. When I arrived in Persia I found the Shah in some slight degree humbled by the failure of his expedition to the Goorgaun, and I found the Prime Minister placed in opposition to the Russian Party, which, headed by Mirza Massood, and backed by Count Simonitch, had made an unsuccessful attempt to displace the Premier. I connected myself with the latter, and supported him against his rivals, whom he succeeded in overthrowing. The Shah, influenced by the feelings of friendship, if I may so speak, which had subsisted between him and myself from his early youth, and by the share I had taken in getting him named heir to the throne; knowing, too, that I was not only attached to his family and person, but also a warm advocate of the interests of Persia, certainly conceived hopes that I might be empowered and induced to pursue a line of policy more favourable to his wishes than that which Mr. Ellis had considered it his duty to adopt. These hopes were probably strengthened by the care with which I for some time abstained from mooting the question of Herat, and the public assurances I gave the Shah of the favourable disposition of the British Government, which, indeed, has been made evident by the authority I had received to make certain modifications in the [Commercial] Treaty exceedingly favourable to Persia. Thus the Shah from confidence in my personal feelings, and the Prime Minister in consideration of the support he received from me, and both because they found I had the authority to effect some arrangements favour-

able to them, and had refrained from pressing them on points that could raise any difference of opinion or cause any irritation, were in hopes that I was prepared to bribe them, to adopt a more satisfactory course in respect to England, and to purchase from them the Commercial Treaty, and other arrangements which were desired. But as soon as they found I had not such intentions, they began to resist my proposals and refuse my requests, giving many hints that the Commercial Treaty, for example, might be arranged if I would admit certain pecuniary claims on the British Government which Persia had advanced. Matters remained in this state till the question of Herat came to be discussed with Futteh Mohammed Khan.* I still continued to preserve the confidence of the Shah and the Premier, in so much that they both desired to see me take part in the negotiation. But finding that the pretensions of the Shah were such as I could not admit without sacrificing the interests of my own Government, and having hitherto been unable to obtain from the Persian Government the performance of one act which I could regard as a pledge of the sincerity of its professions towards England, I determined to remonstrate against the Shah's proposed expedition to Herat in such terms as I thought most likely to deter him from prosecuting the enterprise. I had no sooner declared my sentiments on this subject than the Shah and his Ministers perceived that I was no longer to be put off with fair words, and that they had miscalculated in supposing that I could be led on to lavish the public money (which they probably believed I had the power to do) in the hopes of obtaining the object I proposed to myself. I then purposely pressed the negotiations of the Commercial Treaty, and the Shah only escaped from terminating that affair by setting out for Khorassan. His Majesty still continued apprehensive that the discussions which had

* An emissary from Kamran, who came to Teheran to arrange terms by which the invasion of Afghanistan could have been prevented.

taken place here might lead to some attempt to thwart his expedition against Herat, and he lingered for some time at Shahrood, where he received intelligence of the flight of the Princes from Ardebil.* In a letter to his mother at this time he spoke of returning, and assigning as one of his reasons that I was displeased with what had passed. But having received at this time from the Russian Government ample assurances on the subject of the Princes, and finding that my remonstrances were followed by no further declaration or proceeding to deter him from going to Herat, he pushed on, still secretly urged by Russia through her Agents, if not through her Ministers, and when he found himself surrounded by an army which he thought Herat could not resist for a day, and the object of his wishes apparently so near his reach, he and his Ministers threw off the mask, and dismissing all apprehensions, endeavoured, by publicly insulting me and threatening my life, to evince to their own army and to their enemy the little regard they had for any opposition we might offer to their views of conquest in Afghanistan. The Russian emissary had already proceeded to Candahar and Cabul, and the concert of Russia and Persia in their project in those countries had been renewed and confirmed at the very moment when the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs was denouncing as foolish and unwise and opposed to the wishes of Russia the expedition on which the Shah was setting out. Then came a promise on the part of Russia to remit a portion of the debt due by Persia if the Shah should take Herat, because the Emperor desired to contribute to the expenses of the war, and Count Simonitch permitted part of the money which had been collected to liquidate the debt still due to Russia to be applied for the purposes of the campaign, and had now again advanced at a critical moment a sum of money for the same purpose.

* The Zil Sooltan and his sons, who might have seized the throne, but escaped from their prison into Russian territory.

"From this detail your Lordship will perceive that, independent of the hope and desire to extort from England sums of money as the price of the friendship and favour of the Shah, to which my Persian friends attribute the systematic opposition of this Government to the views and wishes of England, there is another ground of opposition, which, if these hopes were to fade away, and that desire to be extinguished, would still leave England and Persia opposed to one another in what each government regards as a point of first importance, and that as long as the question of our relative positions in Afghanistan may remain undecided so long will this opposition to England and this concert with Russia continue to exist. I have already expressed my opinion that the fall of Herat to the Shah, far from deciding the question, would but render the solution more difficult, and it therefore appears to me that almost any measure which it may be necessary to resort to for the purpose of saving Herat, and putting this question to rest, will in the end be found to be more economical, more conducive to our reputation and security, and in every respect more advantageous, whether as regards our relations with Persia or our situation and prospects in the countries to the eastward, than the measures which, after the fall of Herat, I think we would infallibly be forced to resort to.

"I have already taken the liberty of stating the means which have been suggested to me, and which I myself contemplated as well suited to accomplish the object which I have proposed, and I am fully convinced that the first intelligence which might reach the Shah that the British Government was sending an expedition to the Gulf, magnified as the extent would be by distance, would not fail to awaken him to a sense of danger, to lead him to abandon the foolish impression he has received that we are so dependent for the security of India on his good-will and pleasure, that if he opposes us we have no alternative but to purchase his forbearance or his favour, and to convince him that we are prepared to assert our rights

and to defend our interests against whomsoever may withhold or assail them."

"Les talents de Monsieur McNeill se fait sentir," was inadvertently said by one of the Russians, as he was reading a letter in the hearing of an Englishman at Tabreez. The recall of Count Simonitch by the Czar was one of the ways in which his talent made itself felt. While Count Nesselrode at St. Petersburg was assuring Lord Durham (British Ambassador) that Russia was as anxious as England to discourage Mohammed Shah's ambitious designs against Herat, Mr. McNeill convinced his own Government that Count Simonitch was acting and speaking in an entirely opposite sense. "We drove Russia to the wall about Count Simonitch," says Lord Palmerston, in a private letter to Mr. McNeill of 10th June, 1827; "the Emperor had no choice but to recall him or to acknowledge that Nesselrode had been telling us a series of untruths." Again, on 2nd July Lord Palmerston writes:

"Duhamel, who is to succeed Simonitch, is perhaps a more formidable man because he is not quite so much of an intriguer. Simonitch overshot his mark: Duhamel will take a better aim. But you will, no doubt, be able to open the Shah's eyes to his true interests, which ought to lead him to remain at peace with Russia, but to emancipate herself [*sic*] from her thraldom. Lord Durham, who is recently arrived, tells me that Nesselrode stated to him, just before he left St. Petersburg, that the Emperor, out of friendship for the Shah, had given, or lent him, two ships of war to carry on some naval operations at the south-eastern corner of the Caspian. We shall probably hear from you what it is that this relates to, and whether the corvettes are to act under the Russian or the Persian flag."

CHAPTER XV

THE SIEGE OF HERAT

1838

Up to November, 1837, Mr. McNeill practised and preached great patience with the Shah and his Ministers, taking care that neither he nor any member of the British party should resent small insults, which began to be not infrequently offered as an expression of the Shah's displeasure, especially to those British officers who were in Persia for the purpose of drilling the Persian Army, but who had refused to take part in the attack on Herat. In November, however, news came of an outrage which could not be diplomatically ignored. On 16th October, Ali Mohammed Beg, a trusted, confidential servant, who had been attached to the British Mission for thirty years, and was therefore well known, left Herat with letters from the Vizier of Kamran Shah, from Lieutenant Pottinger, who was travelling in Afghanistan by order of the Governor-General of India, and from others, for Mr. McNeill at Teheran. The letter from Yar Mahomed Khan, the Vizier, was one authorizing Mr. McNeill, on the part of the Herat Government, to negotiate with the Persian Government on their behalf. This messenger was seized by horsemen from the Shah's camp, had part of his clothes taken from him; the horses which he was bringing to the British Envoy were seized, and he was dragged to camp, and there placed in custody. He managed to make his way to Colonel Stoddart, the only British officer who was with the Shah; by that officer

he was conducted to the Prime Minister, who, when he was informed that the man was in the service of the British Mission, did not release him, nor did he take steps to punish those who seized him, but again placed him in custody, where he was stripped and searched for letters, violently threatened, and spoken to in most disgusting and opprobrious language by an officer, of Brigadier rank, in the Persian Army named Hadji Khan. For this outrage Mr. McNeill demanded an apology from the Persian Government and the dismissal of Hadji Khan, requiring that he should not be reinstated till the British Government had forgiven him. Mr. McNeill, in writing to Lord Palmerston, adds :

" I have no hesitation in assuring your Lordship that, in my opinion, it would be quite impossible for any British Minister to carry on the public business in a manner creditable either to his Sovereign or to himself if reparation for this insult be not exacted."

The reply to this demand from the Shah's Minister was evasive and unsatisfactory, and Hadji Khan was in no way punished. Following on this, the East India Company's Acting Resident at Bushire, Dr. Mackenzie, was threatened by the Persian Government of Bushire, and Lord Palmerston directed Mr. McNeill to inform the Persian Minister that England demands and expects protection for her Residents.

On 8th March, 1838, Mr. McNeill decided to go to Herat himself. The Shah and his army had been before that city since the previous December, but it still held out. Mirza Masood, Minister for Foreign Affairs, prompted by Count Simonitch, tried to dissuade Mr. McNeill from his purpose ; and of his reception by the Shah he writes :

" The Shah, on hearing of my approach, sent a man to prevent me from advancing, and on my arrival omitted all the usual marks of attention. But as I had my credentials from the Queen to present, I demanded an audience in due form, and they had not the courage to

refuse. Strict orders have, however, been issued to prevent anyone from calling upon me; even my most intimate acquaintances have been unable to do more than send me, secretly, messages expressing their regret and disgust."

During this audience with the Shah, Mr. McNeill's personality once more conquered. So much did his influence reassert itself that the Shah said he agreed to the Commercial Treaty, and settled a matter long in dispute about a British Consul being allowed to reside at Tabreez; he then consented to Mr. McNeill's opening negotiations for peace with Herat. To facilitate this, a truce was agreed upon, which was to last from the time Mr. McNeill entered the town till he left it again, and Colonel Stoddart, with Captain Farrant and Major Todd, who had accompanied Mr. McNeill from Teheran, went down, by agreement, to the Persian trenches to see that the truce was kept there. To Mr. Baillie Fraser Mr. McNeill wrote the following account:

"It was about nine o'clock at night" (on 19th April, 1838) "when I got to the quarters of the Persian officers commanding in the trenches opposite the south-east angle of the town. Everything had been prepared for an assault; the Persian troops were in good spirits, and high in their hopes of victory and plunder, and in the anticipation of that uncontrolled exercise of arbitrary power, even for a few hours, which, I expect, has an attraction for the soldier as strong as, and quite independent of, the gratifications it may enable him to procure. High above our heads were the lofty towers of Herat, with each flaming light blazing like a comet. The balls from the battlements came sharp and frequent, whistling by; the *hooshar bash* of the Afghans repeated from post to post was not the cry of the drowsy sentinel, but the quick, stern warning of men who were looking for the first rush of the enemy. In the Afghan trenches opposite to us was my friend Futteh Mohammed Khan, who had

been Envoy in Persia, and for whom I had sent a note to the head of the Persian sap, by your old acquaintance Ali M. Beg Mafee, who knew the Khan's personal attendants, and could call them by name. You may imagine the Afghans were sufficiently jealous on such a night of allowing anyone to approach them, but on recognizing the voice of my man, they sent a man to meet him between the trenches, and, mutual confidence having been established, torches were sent for me; and, surrounded by a crowd of Afghans, noble and most picturesque-looking fellows, I passed into their trenches, and, stepping down, found myself in the arms of Futteh M. Khan, who, with his sword drawn and his pistols in his girdle, was a fine picture of a young warrior. The Afghans were full of confidence and courage, a splendid body of men, and their position appeared to me to be so strong that I confess I should rather have been one of the defenders than of the assailants. I instantly sent a man into the town to announce the truce and my own arrival, and while I was sitting with my friend we saw cordial greetings between my Persian servants and the Khan's attendants who had been to Teheran; presently gossips were chattering, in rather a loud voice it is true, across the short space which divided the trenches, and the night which had been destined for carnage became one of relaxation and enjoyment. When everything had been prepared for my reception, I went into the town, passing, for near a quarter of a mile, along the trenches before I got to the gate. Several of the Sirdars, men whose names are now famous in Afghan story, met me at different points, and at the gate of the Ark I was received by Yar Mohammed Khan, the life and soul of the defence; a man who, with some great faults, is certainly, at this moment, one of the most remarkable men in Asia. The remainder of the night I spent in discussion with him, and after about an hour of sleep, met him again, and agreed with him on a draft of a Treaty. But before I left him I received intelligence of the arrival in camp of a Russian

Minister, and as I had no doubt His Excellency would use every means at his command to thwart the negotiation and push on the siege, and, as I felt that the Shah was very reluctant to abandon it while there was a chance of success, I felt convinced that I should be unable to bring it to a successful termination, and so it was."

To Lord Palmerston he also wrote :

" On the morning of the 20th, before I had yet left the town, I heard of the arrival of Count Simonitch in camp, and I ceased to hope for the adjustment of the differences between Persia and Herat, which was on the point of being effected. On my return to camp I found the Shah's views had undergone an important change : his manner was more abrupt and peremptory, and he at once rejected the proposed agreement, and spoke of prosecuting the siege."

Mr. McNeill was filled with admiration for the defenders of the town. Every citizen whose house faced a principal street had blocked up doors and windows, and made a subterranean opening, through which to enter his house, because, in the event of the Persians carrying the town, they had resolved to defend their houses and families, or die in the attempt. The Afghans made valiant and successful sallies on several occasions. These sallies he described as striking to a degree, and evincing a most determined spirit on the part of the besieged. They were generally made at night, and without either musket or bayonet. Preparatory to one of these sorties, the able-bodied citizens were all assembled in the great square, and from amongst them were selected 500 picked men. These immediately made their wills, and took a solemn and religious oath to die in the fight or bring back their swords dyed with the enemy's blood. They then stripped to their shirts and trousers, and moved, with their naked swords in hand, in a close mass, stealthily creeping along the trenches in deep silence, covered by the darkness of the night. By this means they reached

the Persian trenches without alarming the sentinels at the outposts, and with a sudden fearful yell jumped into the midst of the startled Persian soldiery, who, between sleeping and waking, thus taken by surprise and panic-struck, fled, or made but an unsteady resistance, the Afghans chasing them along the narrow ditch, and cutting them down like grass right and left before they had time to point their muskets. About 400 Persians were killed in one sally, and 200 prisoners taken, besides several guns carried off into the city.

Lieutenant Eldred Pottinger, a young officer of the Bombay Artillery, who was in Herat, greatly helped the defenders by his skill and courage. When Mr. McNeill was in Herat he found that Lieutenant Pottinger was much in need of money, and he was afterwards able to get £300, in Persian coin, conveyed to him secretly. The way in which he did this is described thus :

" How to convey this sum safely into the town was the difficulty, because the Persian lines must be passed, and, moreover, the sum being immense for that country, was a very serious temptation to whatever messenger was entrusted with it. Mr. McNeill had had many proofs of the valour and determination of the Afghans in the neighbourhood, every peasant among them being anxious to shed his blood to the last drop in his country's cause, and he therefore singled out a fine bold peasant, into whose charge he gave the bag of money, with orders to get into the town, remit it to the officer, and then hoist a certain agreed sign at a particular spot on the walls. Well, the Afghan set off in the evening, sword in hand, according to their custom, and Mr. McNeill stood for some time watching his progress. Presently there were reports of musketry in the direction the messenger had taken, following sharp one after the other ; and Mr. McNeill laid down, doubtful of the fate of his emissary, to rest till day dawn, when he should be able to distinguish the preconcerted signal.

"Suddenly, in the middle of the night, he was disturbed by a hail from the sentries round his tent, and a scuffling noise. Starting up, he threw his cloak round him and went out, when he found the Afghan messenger waving his sword, which was reeking with blood, over his head, scarcely able to restrain a loud huzzah expressive of his triumph. He was covered with wounds and gashes in every direction, not only having entered Herat and delivered the gold, but actually cut his way back through the Persian soldiery with his sword, in order to prove his faith. This was surely no common feat of courage, and it was only one amongst many Mr. McNeill witnessed during the time he remained in the Shah's camp."

The Shah shot some of the Afghan prisoners in a most unjustifiable manner, and this gave occasion for a very striking and dreadfully tragic scene, which made so strong an impression upon a lady who, in after years, heard Mr. McNeill describe it, that she set it down, she believes accurately, as follows:

"One day a number of Afghans appeared on their side of the trenches, and called out for the Colonel of the Persian army to speak with them. Mr. McNeill was standing near, and heard the following demand: 'What have you done with Abdullah? (the name of an Afghan gentleman who had been taken prisoner by the Persians). We hear you have killed him, and we demand if this be true?' The Persians were silent, for they knew the man was dead. 'Where is Abdullah?' they repeated. 'Produce him or we will kill our prisoners, and have blood for blood! Where is the Persian Colonel? We would speak with him.' Mr. McNeill then stepped forward and requested them to be quiet, but they insisted loudly on the Persian Colonel coming forward, which, after some hesitation, he did, and they then produced a young Persian officer (the unfortunate Colonel's nephew), their prisoner, and repeated: 'We know you have murdered Abdullah, and we will have blood for blood.

If you do not produce him, this man dies." According to Mahometan law, this was just, and the Persians felt it to be so. There was a dead and awful pause. Mr. McNeill then spoke on one side with the officer, and told him that they were evidently perfectly well informed of the fact, and it was folly to deny it; but that he, Mr. McNeill, would try to persuade them not to put the man to death, but accept the 'ransom of blood,' as it was called. The Colonel then offered any sum of money they chose to demand, but they hooted the proposal. Mr. McNeill then represented in strong terms to them how dreadful it was to kill their defenceless prisoners, and sought to dissuade them from their bloody purpose. They answered that they had no wish to kill their prisoners, but that the Shah had basely murdered their comrade, and that the man's relations demanded blood for blood, and that they had pledged themselves to that effect. This was unanswerable, and everybody felt that the unfortunate officer's fate was sealed. At that moment Abdullah's mother, a gaunt-looking, withered beldame, with a countenance full of the deadliest hate, stood erect on the rampart, and throwing back her long white veil, and stretching forth her withered arm, furiously clenching her fist, shrieked in a fiendish tone of voice: 'They murdered my son, and I will have blood for blood, I say!' The words were scarcely uttered when the unfortunate victim's head rolled down amongst the Persians, who stood motionless and horror-struck below. Sir John McNeill says it was the most appalling scene he ever witnessed, many and singular as his adventures have been."

Another story of the siege is told:

"Once two of the principal gentlemen of Herat came into the Persian camp, unarmed and unattended, feigning an intention to surrender the town at a particular hour that morning to the Shah. They demanded an audience. The Shah was delighted, and sent for Mr. McNeill to

witness and assist in the proposed negotiation. The latter was suspicious of some trick, but after holding some conversation with them, was completely deceived by their perfect composure and the dignified simplicity of their manners. It was then agreed that these two gentlemen should retire to the Herat trenches, and there make a sign to their people, who would immediately prepare to open the city gates for the Persian troops to enter by, and the whole plan was so clearly and definitely arranged that not a doubt remained on Mr. McNeill's mind as to the result being the destruction of the town. The 'spies,' for such they were, having most thoroughly examined the whole of the interior of the Shah's camp and fortifications, retired, and shortly after made their signal, when a small body of the determined Afghans jumped suddenly into the Persian trenches, overpowering the unsuspecting and astonished soldiery, and, headed by the two gentlemen, proceeded to the spot where about six of the Shah's guns were placed, and bore them off in triumph to the town, fighting like madmen with their sabres, and cutting themselves a path by dint of blows.

"The Persians were brave, and could fight well in regular battle, Sir John says, but that these sudden inundations seemed always to stupefy them, and nothing, he says, could be more fearful, for the Afghans were worked up to a pitch of fury that was quite irresistible."

Yet another story is found in the notebook of the same lady:

"When Sir John McNeill went to join the Persian camp stationed before Herat, he apprehended that the feeling which the Shah had against him might make it difficult, on a scarcity occurring, to obtain provisions in the camp, and he therefore laid in and took with him provisions for fifteen days. He stationed his party on a rising ground a very short distance from the camp, and there he caused to be erected a tent to store his provisions in. At first, when the Persians had plenty of

food, they made no difficulties in selling to his servants, and during this time he made them purchase as much as they could procure, by which means he laid in provisions for five days more. This was store for twenty days; or, by putting them as he did on two-thirds allowance from the time the Persians ceased to sell to them, it would have held out for thirty days. But shortly after, the scarcity in Herat became so great that it was found necessary to turn out of the town two thousand of the inhabitants. Those selected to be sent out were Shiahs (that section of Mohammedans to which the Persians belong), in the belief that they would not be injured by the besiegers. These poor creatures had all two, and some three, days' journey to go before they could get any food, and they were already attenuated by want. Sir John saw some lingering in the neighbourhood of his tents, called them, and gave them out of his stores provisions sufficient to carry them to their places of food and shelter. The intelligence spread like wildfire through the camp, and in an amazingly short time the two thousand Heratians had crowded round the English Ambassador's tents. Sir John seems hardly to have hesitated a moment, but at once made preparations for supplying the unfortunate creatures so far as his stores would go. The great difficulty was, as no preparation had been made before, to guard against the same persons getting a double supply, and this the officers and people of his party were employed to do, seeing those already supplied pass on to the other side. Some had already been provided in the Persian camp, and whenever this was suspected they were instantly searched. The little children, too (of whom there were many), were very amusing, flying back to their mothers to empty the flour into their laps and returning with their caps well dusted to receive a second supply! The families were much better off than the single persons, for though, of course, the children received smaller handfuls of flour, still, they were probably in general not diminished in proportion to their size. It

was a most strange and singular scene. The men, noble, fine-looking fellows, were many of them much reduced, and so in want of food that before they had turned away many steps Sir John saw them begin to lick the dry flour, and the moment they reached a little stream which flowed near, almost all began to make little dough cakes. In this manner fifteen hundred people were supplied (about five hundred having already been fed in the Persian camp) with food sufficient to enable them to reach their destinations. Sir John says the Persian servants behaved remarkably well, that there was not a single murmur amongst them, but cheerful co-operation in the act of charity which was exposing themselves to the same risk from which they were saving their brethren. 'To be sure, the fellows trusted me,' he said, 'and knew I would not see them want if food was to be had at any price.' The distribution was just over when, by the aid of a glass, Sir John discovered a caravan laden with sacks coming towards the camp. He immediately despatched officers to meet it, with powers to purchase the whole at *any* amount, and ere long the contents of the caravan had amply replenished his store-houses. Whenever the news of what he had done reached Herat, the Governor sent him a message that he should be supplied with whatever food he wanted. This was probably prompted partly by gratitude, and also that to the Heratians his presence in the Persian camp was all-important, his whole influence being directed to compel the Shah to raise the seige. The Shah also sent for him, and demanded what he meant by having fed his enemies. Sir John replied that he meant to save the lives of fellow-creatures, and also that he had been impelled to it by a desire to save him (the Shah) from the disgrace of leaving his co-religionists to perish before his face! The Shah did look abashed at this, and Sir John had reason to believe that on a future occasion, after he left the camp, and when another body of Heratians was turned out, it had the effect of inducing the Shah to succour them."

It was six months since Mr. McNeill had heard from the Indian Government. He had not had one word of instructions from the Home Government; his hope that Captain Burnes' Mission to Cabul and Kandahar had been supported and was successful was dashed to the ground by the arrival in the Persian Camp of a son of Kohendil Khan of Kandahar with a treaty between Persia, Kandahar and Russia against England. Count Simonitch (whose "recall" to Russia had not as yet been effectual) arrived in the camp, and intimated that "10,000 Russian troops had marched towards Khiva to conquer that country and Bokhara, and urged the Shah to persevere in his enterprise when the two Governments could, in co-operation, settle all these countries, and then adjust their frontier to the east of Persia." Overwhelmed by all this, Mr. McNeill writes:

"I should have succeeded, I think, if the Shah had not been, all at once, at a critical moment, credibly informed that he had nothing to fear from the eastward; in other words, that our Government was determined to do nothing but to let Herat stand or fall by its own strength or weakness. This was laying me flat on my back. All the insults that had been offered, the neglect and indignity with which we are treated, are not only endured, as far as they know, tamely, by the Government of England; but we submit, without daring to oppose or resent it, to see Persia ushering Russia into Afghanistan, and breaking down the defences of the approaches to India in concert with the only Power which can make any use of the road when it is opened. We shelter ourselves under our good faith, our strict observance of the Treaty, which forbids us from interfering in a war between Persia and the Afghans; but the fact is that, Russia having had the courage to come forward, we, as usual, *slink* away and leave the field for her, having done just enough to prove to the whole world that we would have done more if we had dared. It is vain to suppose that

we can possess, or retain, or obtain, influence anywhere on these terms. . . . At Herat it is pretty much the same thing. The independence of Herat is an object of the first magnitude, 'a question of vital importance,' says the Government of India, but we will do nothing to protect it. Tell the Heraties not to be beaten, not to put themselves under Persia; to hold out to the last man.' 'Well,' say the Heraties, 'we will, but you must rescue us if the enemy should prove too strong for us; or if you won't do that, send some of your countrymen to assist us; or, if you can't do that, give us a little money to hire troops, to pay our own men, and we are ready to defend Herat as long as it is tenable.' In answer we inform them that we can't do anything for them; that we cannot even prevent their countrymen from attacking them, but still that we wish them to hold out. If we do not hold this language, they can infer nothing else from our proceedings; yet they are holding out, and that most stoutly. Six months have they defended Herat, and only two nights ago they made a sortie, in which they killed, wounded, and made prisoners, five officers and several hundred men, besides carrying off three guns from the Persian batteries, making seven they have carried off since I arrived here on 6th of April."

In May Mr. McNeill sent Major Todd to Lord Auckland with despatches. On 7th June he suspended his official functions with the Shah, and proceeded to Teheran on his way to the Turkish frontier. He had not left Persian soil when he heard that at length the small force asked for by him had been despatched from India. It consisted of only 387 troops and two guns. They were landed and encamped on the island of Karrack, opposite to Bushire, on 19th June. On receipt of news of this move, and of despatches from Lord Palmerston, authorizing him to use more peremptory language, Mr. McNeill sent Colonel Stoddart back to the Persian camp with the following message to the Shah in writing:

"I am directed by Her Britannic Majesty's Ministers to inform Your Majesty that the British Government look upon this enterprise in which Your Majesty is engaged against the Afghans as being undertaken in a spirit of hostility towards British India, and as being totally incompatible with the spirit and intention of the Alliance which has been established between Great Britain and Persia; that consequently, if the project is persevered in, the friendly relations which up to this time have so happily subsisted between Great Britain and Persia must necessarily cease, and that Great Britain must take such steps as she may think best calculated to provide for the security of the possessions of the British Crown.

"I am further directed to inform Your Majesty that, if Herat should have surrendered to Your Majesty, the British Government will consider Your Majesty's continuing to occupy that or any other portion of Afghanistan as a hostile demonstration against England.

"The British Government also demands reparation for the violence to its messenger, which is a matter quite distinct from the question of Herat. Her Britannic Majesty's Minister Plenipotentiary trusts Your Majesty will grant that reparation, in the manner which he pointed out, and thus relieve the British Government from the necessity of having recourse to other measures to exact it.

"Your Majesty is no doubt informed by the Government of Kars that a body of British troops, and a naval armament consisting of five sloops-of-war, have already arrived in the Persian Gulf, and that for the present the troops have been landed on the island of Karrack. The measures Your Majesty may adopt in consequence of this representation will decide the future movements and proceedings of that armament; but Your Majesty must perceive from the view which Her Majesty's Government has taken of the present state of affairs, and from the effect which must be produced on the minds of Her Majesty's Ministers and the British Authorities in India by the subsequent proceedings of the Persian

Government, with which they were not then acquainted, that nothing but the immediate adoption of measures to comply with the demands of the British Government can induce the Authorities acting under the orders of that Government to suspend the measures which are in progress for the defence of British interests and the vindication of British honour.

"In the meantime Her Britannic Majesty's Minister Plenipotentiary will pursue his journey to the Turkish Frontier, and will remove all the English from the Persian Territory; but he trusts that the bad counsel of the ill-disposed persons who have induced Your Majesty to persevere in a course which has placed his affairs in this position will no longer influence Your Majesty; and that, guided by your own wisdom and by regard to the true interests of Persia, Your Majesty will adopt such measures as will enable Her Britannic Majesty's Minister Plenipotentiary to return to Your Majesty's Court, and to restore to its former footing of cordiality the alliance between the two Governments.

"Your Majesty has seen that all Her Majesty's Minister Plenipotentiary has stated to Your Majesty in regard to these matters has been dictated by sincerity and truth, and by an anxious desire to avert the evils which it was obvious must result from a perseverance in the course which the Persian Government was pursuing; and he again assures Your Majesty that nothing but immediate danger and injury to Persia can result from rejecting the demands of the British Government.

"That God may guide Your Majesty to a wise decision, and that He may forgive those whose evil counsels have led to such a state of things, is the earnest prayer of an old and faithful servant, who has ever been a sincere well-wisher of the Shah and the Persian Government.

(Signed) "JOHN MCNEILL."

This letter reached the Shah at a time when he was disheartened by the failure of his grand assault and the

strength shown by the Herat garrison, who owed much to the skill and fortitude of Lieutenant Pottinger, who was within the walls, and though the demonstration in the Persian Gulf was so tardy in its fulfilment that Mr. McNeill doubted its efficacy, it gave the finishing touch. Oriental imagination helped by magnifying the 500 troops to 5,000, and the effect upon the Shah was such that Colonel Stoddart soon had the satisfaction of writing, from the royal camp before Herat, 14th August, 1838:

"I have the honour to inform you that the Shah summoned me to an audience this morning, at which His Majesty formally gave me an answer to the message I had the honour of delivering in writing on the 12th inst. His Majesty stated: 'We consent to the whole of the demands of the British Government. We will not go to war. Were it not for the sake of their friendship, we should not return from before Herat. Had we known that our coming here would risk the loss of their friendship, we certainly would not have come at all.'

"I replied that I thanked God His Majesty thus regarded the true interests of Persia."

Meanwhile Major Todd reached Simla, and found the Indian Council assembled there. Once roused to the danger, they decided upon large measures, and soon "all India was in a state of feverish excitement," to quote Major Todd, over the preparations for the first Afghan expedition—that expedition designed to reinstate Shah Shooja at Cabul, which ended so disastrously, and which need never have been sent had John McNeill and Alexander Burnes been given more definite support before Russian intrigue had made such strides.

Mr. McNeill had recommended that, should it be necessary, the British force in the Persian Gulf be reinforced up to 5,000, and the Persian town of Bushire should be attacked. The following letters are Lords Auckland and Palmerston's replies:

(*Private.*)

"SIMLA,
"*24th October*, 1838.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"Your letter of 5th August has just reached me, and it has been most welcome.

"I know not when you will have heard from me. I am only aware that some of the letters written by me upon matters of deep interest were intercepted on their road, and I have been for months without hearing from you at times when information and advice from you were most intensely desired by me. I can now but ill conjecture when what I am writing will come to your hands; yet, perhaps, without reference to the past, it will be well if I give you an account of things as they at present stand in the fewest words possible. My account may possibly be the first you will receive, and you will be glad to see by it that my views of the policy to be pursued have differed but slightly from yours.

"I have no authentic particulars of the siege of Herat of a later date than that of the assault and repulse of the Persians; but I have general rumour and accounts from our native correspondents to the beginning of September, and of so favourable a nature that I am led to the confident belief of the siege having been raised, and that your message to the Persian Camp, the occupation of the Islands of Karrack, and our other preparations have very much contributed to this event. You will have thought our military movements slow on the side of India, but we have an unmanageable climate to deal with, and must be governed by the seasons. Our rains only passed away at the beginning of this month, and our army will be collected at Kurnaul on the 1st of November. I shall find it on the banks of the Sutlej at the end of that month, and in the first week of December it will be on its march to Shikarpore. The Bengal Army will amount to about fourteen thousand men, and will be supported by from five to ten thousand from Bombay, and Shah Shooja will have about six thousand officered by British

officers. If the Persians should have retreated, and if the Shah finds in the country the support which he has every reason to expect, this force will appear to be unnecessarily large; but it has been collected to meet all possible contingencies, and even though it should be spared a march to Herat, its peaceful progress to Shikarpore, Candahar, Cabul, Attock, and Loodiana will not be without a salutary effect. Sir Henry Fane will have the command of this army, and we have no better soldier, and Mr. Macnaghten will represent me with Shah Shooja, and India has no abler man. In the event of perfect success, he will remain at Cabul and apply himself to the reconciliation of differences, and to the consolidation of the strength of Afghanistan. Captain Burnes will be attached to him, and will undertake special missions in advance. He is now at Shikarpore. Major Todd is secretary to Mr. Macnaghten, and highly satisfied with his position; and Lieutenant Leech, Dr. Lord, and other excellent officers, are also attached to the Mission. I am fearful that neither letter nor message from me has reached Lieutenant Pottinger. I have lately appointed him Assistant to Mr. Macnaghten, and if the settlement of affairs in this quarter should be accomplished, as I hope it may, he will then obtain the position in the public service which by his gallantry and conduct he has well deserved. He will, of course, for the present continue at Herat, and I have letters on the road to him and to Kamran. Upon the side of Peshawar Shah Shooja's eldest son will show himself, and invite the co-operation of the Afghan Chiefs. He will have with him Captain Wade and other British officers, and a good nurse, and thirty or forty thousand Sikhs at his back; and though Sikh and Afghan antipathies are so strong as to make me not impatient for their advance, they will do so in case of necessity, and at all events will hold Dost Mohammed in check. I have no means yet of ascertaining the state of national feeling in Afghanistan, but Shah Shooja is sanguine in his expectation that it

will be found universally favourable to him. It cannot, however, be otherwise than that religious and family feelings should yet give a considerable adherence to the Barukayes family, and if not at Candahar I expect to hear of resistance at Cabul. Runjeet Singh is in the best of dispositions, and I hope to show him Sir Henry Fane's army on the Sutlej at the end of next month. The Amcers of Scinde have been traitorous and unfriendly. The march of the Bombay force across their territory to Karrack has made so useful an impression . . . Colonel Shireff has with him sufficient force for the occupation of Bushire, but I should not like hastily to attempt a measure of actual invasion, except to some understood and definite end. I would not hastily excite a population apparently so unsettled to rise in arms with the hope of support, when the probability is that they might ultimately be left to the mercy of their old oppressors, and it would require a stronger force than we can easily afford at present, permanently to occupy the northern provinces of Persia. I hope, however, to have a good reserve at Bombay, and circumstances will decide as to whether it will be expedient to attempt such a diversion as you seem to recommend. I am, however, the less inclined to attend to your recommendation as you have written, before any information on the extensive and important enterprise in which I am engaged had reached you. I enclose for your further information a copy of the declaration which I have lately issued.

" It is so uncertain whether, and at what time, this letter will reach you that I will not write to you on other subjects further than to say that it is not only towards the west that I have my subjects of anxiety, but our army is strong, and I feel equal to the difficulties. I hope that whether those troops are or are not sent to the Persian Gulf, the Admiral with his 74 will make his appearance there before the end of the year.

" For yourself, I can only say that I feel most gratefully towards you, as I am sure the Government at home will

feel, for the ability and determination with which you have wrestled against circumstances of no ordinary difficulty.

"Most truly yours,

"AUCKLAND."

Extract from a Private Letter from Lord Palmerston to Mr. McNeill.

"*26th September*, 1838.

"I have read your despatches and private letter of the 2nd and 4th August, and I have the satisfaction of assuring you that we entirely approve everything you have done and said. I am inclined to doubt, as you do, that the Shah will yield to the message sent him by Colonel Stoddart; but our demonstration at Carrak, and the measures which Lord Auckland will probably have taken to act in Afghanistan may have the desired effect. We should prefer, *ceteris paribus*, action in Afghanistan to action in Southern Persia. The inconvenience of the latter measure is that it tends to produce that which we do not want—namely, the dethronement of the Shah, and that it would probably raise in arms against the Shah many friends of ours in Persia whom we might not afterwards be able fully to protect against the vengeance of the Shah. That in Persia we are opposing the weak part of our blade to the strong part of that of our enemy; that if Russia chose to march troops, she would probably be able to overpower the 5,000 men of ours, and drive them back to the sea. If, indeed, by a *coup de main* we could really overthrow the Shah, and put up a better man in his place, and keep that better man there in spite of the former Shah and of Russia, that indeed might be a game worth playing; but I should fear that we have not the means of striking so great a blow; on the other hand, whatever we do in Afghanistan is done straight towards a permanent object. Every inch we gain there is gained in order to be kept;

there we are not making a diversion, but striking home in good earnest; we should retain permanently under our protection all whom we might summon to arms; and there we are strong and near our home, and there Russia and Persia are weak. But the Afghanistan operation may be more difficult and expensive than the other; and we are quite sure that you and Lord Auckland will have chosen the course which on the whole is best."

The only means of communication between Lord Auckland and Mr. McNeill was by messengers who carried letters and took two months for a single journey. In times of peace, it was therefore not easy to consult and decide on any course in unison, but during the nine months of the siege of Herat it was absolutely impossible to consult at all. The messengers were intercepted and the despatches were not delivered at either end for six months. Lord Palmerston seems never to have imagined such a probability, and he and Lord Auckland both preferred action in Afghanistan to an increase of action in the Persian Gulf, though Mr. McNeill had recommended the latter course, and history proved him to be the wiser. It is curious, with knowledge of subsequent events, to read Lord Palmerston's "Every inch we gain there is gained in order to be kept."

When Colonel Stoddart's messenger from the camp before Herat reached Mr. McNeill, he was at Tabreez, on the point of leaving for Bayazede, over the frontier. He wrote to his wife from there:

"Had not the promises made to me in camp been so frequently broken, I should have been bound to regard this as satisfactory, but considering what I had seen, I cannot feel secure of these people, and therefore I have determined to remain here another week, when, if the intelligence of the Shah's having acted on his promises should arrive, I shall have to return to Teheran, but if H.M. should prove to be false, I shall proceed to the

frontier as I originally intended. . . . It is very probable that my not having succeeded in effecting the subjects contemplated by myself in my journey to Teheran may expose me to unpleasant animadversions both in the House of Commons and in the newspapers, but I have done my best, and no one could do more. I should certainly have succeeded had not the failure of Burnes' Mission to Cabul and Kandahar, an event on which I had no right to calculate, deprived me of my chief support, and relieved the Shah from all anxiety on that side. I am far from thinking that this failure is to be attributed to any error on the part of Burnes, but I rather attribute it to the course adopted by the Government of India, which could not, in my humble opinion, succeed. Before Burnes' Mission went to Cabul, when it was first proposed to send one thither, I wrote to Lord Auckland, telling him that success there would strengthen my hands here, but that to fail there would ruin me in Persia, and so it has turned out. If Burnes could have maintained the ground he gained at Cabul and Kandahar, which, if he had been supported as I think he ought to have been, he would no doubt have done, I should have fully succeeded at Herat, for the Shah had actually agreed to a Treaty with that place, and only drew back when he heard that we had lost our footing in Cabul and Kandahar, and that the Russians had gained one driving us out. These things, of course, you will not speak of, but I mention them that you may disregard any attack that may be made upon me. For myself, I have a contempt for all calumnies uttered against me. When I hear of anything having been said against me, my first feeling is to satisfy myself whether or not it is true, and if I find that the injurious statement is such as I know to be false, I confess I feel inclined to treat it with utter contempt. . . . I hope, too, that you, my dearest, will disregard any attacks that may be made upon my public proceedings, and that you will not allow them, should any such be made, to interfere in any way with your repose and tranquillity."

In the end, Shah Mohammed Mirza did raise the siege, and rode away from Herat without coming to any terms with Kamran Shah after nine months' close siege, barren of results. He was very angry, and looked upon the British Envoy as being personally the cause of his failure.

Lord Palmerston to John McNeill.

"F. O.,
"*12th December*, 1838.

"My dear Sir,

"I congratulate you on the success of your measures for saving Herat. It is a most Important Result, and will tell upon all our Interests in all Parts of the world. I hope to hear by the next Messenger that satisfaction has been given for the outrage committed upon your Messenger, and if, in addition, you can send us home the Commercial Treaty, we shall indeed stand well as far as regards our Persian affairs.

"I expect that the consequence of our driving the Shah from Herat, and of our great operation in Afghanistan will be to re-establish our influence in Persia, and that in proportion as the Shah finds us strong, and bold, and fearless of Russia, he will be disposed to cultivate our alliance.

"We shall, of course, evacuate Karrack whenever satisfaction has been given us; as we shall have no good pretence for retaining possession of that island.

"You will, of course, avail yourself of your leave of absence whenever you find you can do so without detriment to the public service.

"My dear sir,

"Yours faithfully,

"Palmerston."

The Shah arrived at Teheran, but declined to accede to the demands of Britain regarding the detention and ill-treatment of the messenger, or to carry out his promises

with regard to the Commercial Treaty and other matters ; therefore Mr. McNeill decided not to return to Teheran himself, but to send Colonel Shiel, who had just returned from England, and Dr. Riach. Their reports were unfavourable, so he wrote to Lord Palmerston as follows :

"ROODBAR,
"*3rd December*, 1838.

"Your lordship will perceive from the public correspondence transmitted by this messenger, and especially from my despatch No. 72, that all the attempts that I have made to obtain adequate satisfaction for the affair of the Gholam have failed, and that the tone assumed by the Persian Government as well as its proceedings, and the information I have been able to collect, leaves little doubt that Persia is preparing for hostilities, and that she is not desirous to avoid rupture with England. What hope or promise of assistance she may have from Russia I am unable to say, but I conclude from the terms of Mirza Massood's letter to Count Nesselrode, of which a copy has been secretly obtained, that no specific engagement or promise to assist the Shah has yet been given. But this letter was written before Colonel Duhamel's arrival (though the bearer cannot yet have passed Tiflis), and I have no means of knowing what language the new Envoy has held with the Shah. I have certain information that the Russian Mission was consulted, for Mr. Goot asked for originals of certain papers in the presence of Colonel Sheil and Mr. Riach, and it was afterwards discovered the originals referred to were those of Colonel Shiel's letters to Mirza Massood. If any inference may be drawn from this fact as to the advice given by the Russian Mission, we might infer from the answers given by the Persian Government to my demands that the Russian Mission has led Persia to expect support, and it may fairly be concluded that it did not counsel the Shah to seek a reconciliation with England.

"On the whole, I am disposed to think that Persia is preparing to act on her Treaty with Kandahar, and if she is, a war must, of course, be inevitable.

"In respect to the feelings against myself personally which the Shah and his Ministers have so strongly and publicly evinced, I have nothing to add to what I have stated in my public letter on this subject. But whether just or not, the sentiments which the Persian Government have expressed towards me in its communications to so many Courts,* must necessarily affect my position here, and may, not improbably, be an additional impediment to a reconciliation between Persia and England should the Shah desire at any time to bring about such a result, for I think it probable it would be less humiliating to his feelings to make the concessions that are required of him to another person rather than to me. I am therefore of opinion that I shall be taking the course most likely to be advantageous to the public service, and least likely to be embarrassing to Her Majesty's Government, when I avail myself of the opportunity now offered me to take advantage of my leave of absence, and return to England, leaving it to be decided by future events, and by the views of Government, whether or not I should come back to Persia. It is therefore my intention, so soon as I can make the necessary arrangements for transferring the charge of the Mission to Colonel Sheil, to set out for England, and I have already addressed Colonel Duhamel, requesting a passport to enable me to travel through Russia."

On 2nd January, 1839, Mr. McNeill left Persia for home. Colonel Sheil and the other members of the Mission also removed to Erzeroum in Turkey, and the British officers were sent to Bagdad. The rupture between the British and Persian Courts was thus complete, but communication by letter did not cease, and Colonel

* A Persian Envoy, Hoossein Khan, was at this time visiting the Courts of Europe.

Sheil continued to act as Chargé d'Affaires from Erzeroum. When Mr. McNeill left England in June, 1836, his hope had been to carry out the instructions given him regarding the Commercial Treaty, etc., and to have left Persia for good in two years, feeling that British prestige was restored there. He was now leaving it after two and a half years of great anxiety and a seeming failure, his hair whitened, his health broken, but with the knowledge that he had done his best, and with the satisfaction that Lord Palmerston considered he had done the best possible.

In 1828, by his influence with Fetteh Ali Shah, he had largely helped to rescue Persia from the grip of Russia at the peace of Turcomanchai. Ten years later, by his successful efforts to bring to an end Mohamed Mirza Shah's enterprise against Herat, he had again put off the day when Britain should acknowledge Russia as the paramount Power in Persia.

CHAPTER XVI

TWO YEARS IN ENGLAND

1839—1840

On his way through Russian territory Mr. McNeill received every attention from the Russian authorities. He had a long conversation with General Golovine, the Governor of the Caucasus and Commander-in-Chief, and with General Kotzebue, Chef d'État Major, who both assured him that Count Simonitch's proceedings were unauthorized by the Emperor.

It was an unadventurous journey, but near Moscow he had an unpleasant experience, while travelling at night, of being upset out of his sledge, falling on the back of his head, and being a little stunned. Before he could get up, the sledge following, containing his luggage and three people, was upon him; one of the horses put his foot on his chest, but the "poor beast did not let all his weight upon me, for I felt him ease his leg and shift to the other immediately." He was lying across the road, and all three horses passed over him; then the front of the sledge came against him, and he was pushed along, every moment expecting it would go over him. At length, partly by his own efforts and partly by the pushing of the sledge, his body got clear, but one of the runners went over his left leg, doing no serious injury. This narrow escape, nerve-shaking as it must have been, does not seem to have affected his self-possession at the momentous interview which took place three days later in St. Petersburg between him and Count Nessel-

rode. A number of despatches had passed between Lord Palmerston, British Foreign Minister; Lord Clanricarde, Ambassador at St. Petersburg; Count Nesselrode, Russian Foreign Minister; and Count Pozzo di Borgo, Ambassador in London, on the subject of affairs in Afghanistan. On 26th October, 1838, England formally demanded "explanations with regard to certain circumstances connected with events which have recently occurred in Persia and Afghanistan."

"The Russian Minister who loomed largest in the eyes of Europe during the reign of Nicholas I.," says the author of "The Court of Russia in the Nineteenth Century," "was undoubtedly Count Nesselrode, Minister for Foreign Affairs, who was raised to the dignity of Chancellor of the Empire, and was a prime favourite with the Court. . . . He was born in sight of Lisbon on board an English ship, of German parents in the service of Russia." . . . He "was first a sailor and then a cuirassier and an officer of Horse Guards, but the Emperor Paul thought he looked like a diplomatist, and accordingly transferred the Count to the Department of Foreign Affairs."

A contemporary writer says: "His wife exercises unlimited influence over him, and no person, unless sure of her assent, can rely upon any favour from him. . . . The Count is short and restless, and generally wears the Cross of St. Andrew on his coat."

He had been one of the Chiefs of Department in the Russian Foreign Office since 1815, and must therefore have been a considerably older man than John McNeill. The following note of their interview has been kept. One can picture the short and restless Russian and the tall and very dignified Scotsman, whose voice and words were exceptionally slow and deliberate and manner calm.

"ST. PETERSBURG,
"*February*, 1839.

"Count Nesselrode commenced the conversation by referring to a report he had received of the conversations

I had had at Tiflis with Generals Golovine and Kotzebue. H.E. then spoke of the folly of attributing to Russia designs on India, and asked me whether or not I had read the note which he had addressed to Count Pozzo di Borgo. I replied that I had. He then went over the principal points touched on in the Note, and assumed, as the foundation of his argument, that the Shah had a right to attack Herat, and thence assumed the Shah's right to conquer it, insisting on the obligation England was under not to interfere. I begged leave, as soon as he substituted 'taking Herat' for 'attacking Herat,' to observe that there was an essential difference between exacting satisfaction from Herat for injury done and undertaking a war for the purpose of conquest, and more especially after the Shah had been offered, through me, every satisfaction he could reasonably demand in a treaty, which the Herat Envoy had proposed, for the acceptance of the Persian Government. H.E. said he had seen that draft of a treaty, and much regretted that the Shah had not accepted it. I said, as H.E. had seen it, he must be aware that it contained all the satisfaction for the past and all the guarantees for the future that could be well desired. H.E. admitted that it did, and again expressed his regret that the Shah had not accepted it. I then informed H.E. that I feared that the course pursued by Count Simonitch had much contributed to the rejection of that treaty. He said Count S. had acted entirely contrary to his instructions. I observed that it was a great misfortune that the accredited agents of the Russian Government should have persevered for nearly two years after H.E. had announced the views of the Russian Government to Lord Durham, to act in a sense directly opposed to those views, and it was remarkable that they had done so more openly and decidedly after the announcement than before it. That it was incredible to me that Simonitch should have hazarded such a deviation from his duty without some prospect of support, and as that support could not be from the Emperor or H.E., I could

only infer that there was some other influence, at variance with that of the Government, which was exercised with sinister intentions, for that I conceived any man who sought to bring about a misunderstanding between Russia and England could be no loyal subject of the Emperor. H.E. said: 'We are speaking of things that are past; Simonitch has, you see, been recalled.' I said I was aware he had been replaced. He repeated that he had been recalled, and added, 'Let us look to the future. You mentioned at Tiflis that the chief cause of your leaving Persia was the affair of the Messenger.' I replied that the question of my return to the Court, or of my quitting the country, depended solely on the Persian Government granting or withholding the redress I required for the affair of the Messenger. I had demanded an apology, which had been refused. He said I was represented to have refused to receive Hagee Aghassee when he proposed to visit me for the express purpose of making this apology. I replied the statement was inaccurate, for that it had not been announced to me that any apology would be made; on the contrary, the whole thing had been denied, and that I had sent a message which amounted, in substance, to this: 'If you are coming to give me the apology I demand, I shall be happy to see you, and if you are coming merely to talk, I have nothing to say.' The Count said: 'You have got the Shah back from Herat, but your troops still remain at Karrak.' I replied that even if the Shah had never gone to Herat it might have been necessary to occupy Karrak for the purpose of obliging the Shah to give redress for the outrage on the Messenger. The Count said: 'How are these differences to be arranged? What do you demand or require?' I replied that previous to my departure from Tabreez I had given the Ameer Nizam, at his own request, my opinion as to the course which the Persian Government ought to pursue, that it was obvious the first step ought to be the satisfaction of our honour, after which all matters of mere interest might be discussed,

but that until the Shah had given ample satisfaction it appeared to me impossible to have any communication with him. That there was no desire on the part of the British Government to make the adjustment of these matters difficult to the Shah, or to prolong the alienation which had taken place, and that personally, from my long connection with Persia, and my attachment to the Shah's family and person, I had been most desirous to see the matters amicably arranged. That I had heard it was said I had been precipitate in leaving Persia, but such was not the fact. The offence for which I required satisfaction had been committed in October or November, 1837. I had left the King's camp at Herat in consequence of reparation having been withheld from me in June, 1838, and had not crossed the frontier into Russia till January, 1839, that ample time, therefore, had been given, and that the final refusal to grant redress was, in fact, a breach of a formal promise made to me in writing as well as a withholding of the satisfaction due to my Government. That as to the necessity of requiring that satisfaction, I had no doubt H.E. was sufficiently well acquainted with the state of society and the laws in Persia to know that it would be impossible for any Mission to remain there which could not protect its servants, and especially its public Messengers. That the question of the security of public Messengers was one which concerned all nations, and that unless they were considered inviolable, especially in such countries as Persia, it would be impossible to carry on public business at all. That I thought H.E. would be of opinion that the amount of reparation and satisfaction I had demanded had not been too great. He said certainly not, that it was a very moderate demand. H.E. then asked me what Colonel Sheil would do in the event of the required apologies being sent to him. I replied that, according to the instructions I had given him, he would in that case either return to the Persian Court or refer the apology to England, and be guided by the instructions

he might receive from thence. That I could not say what further instructions might have reached Colonel Sheil from England subsequent to my departure, but that I presumed, if ample reparation and satisfaction were given, official and even friendly intercourse would be renewed as a matter of course. 'And will you then evacuate Karrak?' inquired H.E. I replied, that from the manner in which the troops were, in the first instance, sent up, it would have been in my own power, on the Shah's doing what was required, to have caused that island to be evacuated, but that the opportunity had not been given me. That, of course, the longer the troops remained there the more complicated would become our connection with the place, and the more difficult would it become to evacuate it, but that I had received no instructions intimating the intention of the Government to retain permanent possession of it. H.E. expressed his extreme regret that I had not seen Mr. Duhamel, saying that Simonitch's recall and the nomination of a man of Duhamel's character was the best proof of the friendly disposition of Russia; that if I had met Duhamel, all would have been arranged. I replied that I certainly very much regretted not having seen Mr. Duhamel, though I did not perceive how my having met him could have materially influenced the circumstances in which I found myself placed with the Persian Government, for that Duhamel was in the exercise of his functions at Teheran when the letters were written by the Persian Government, which induced me to remove the Mission into Turkey. H.E. said: 'But Duhamel did not know you were going away.' I replied that he must have known it, for that I received passports from him to enable me to come through Russia. H.E. seemed a little embarrassed, and said he presumed there must be some post missing, some despatches which he had not received. H.E. then informed me that instructions had, above a month ago, been forwarded to Duhamel, desiring him to use all his influence with the Shah to induce him

to give the English full satisfaction for all their just demands, and to inform the Persian Government that in the affair of the Messenger the Russian Government considered it entirely in the wrong; that he therefore confidently anticipated that the advice I had conveyed through the Ameer Nizam to the Shah, and that given by Duhamel, would be acted upon, and that the reparation and satisfaction we required would be fully accorded. I replied that I had no doubt the Shah, as soon as he found out that Russia was not prepared to support him in resisting the just demands of England, would do what was right, and that but for the expectation he had been led to form of that support, he would not have resisted those demands so long. 'Now,' said H.E., 'we have discussed the affairs of Persia, let us turn to those of Afghanistan. I do not understand,' said H.E., 'in what this treaty with Kandahar affected you, why it was disagreeable to you,' I said it was a treaty which, in the first instance, was avowedly directed against us, and though subsequently modified, it still remained a treaty defensive against England to which Colonel Simonitch had made himself a party. That so far from preserving the integrity of Afghanistan, as H.E. had stated it was calculated to do, the treaty was, in fact, an engagement to dismember the Afghan Empire by separating Herat and Kandahar from the other portions, that it was expressly destroying the independence of that portion by making it subject to Persia for the purpose of maintaining the chief authority in the hands of a Persian faction which had acquired the ascendancy in that country; and that, moreover, it was a treaty expressly set on foot for the purpose of frustrating our negotiations at Kandahar, and preventing our being able to place our relations with that Chief on a footing calculated to preserve the tranquillity of the country. H.E. asked what benefit would arise from our throwing all these countries into confusion by marching troops and changing rulers, etc. I replied that it had always been my opinion that the tranquillity of

Afghanistan could not be secured so long as it was divided into so many petty principalities; that the authorities in India had, however, thought differently, and had attempted to arrive at that result by establishing friendly relations between the different parties. What might have been the result of the experiment it was difficult to say, for that foreign influences had come in to disturb and disconcert the arrangements then in progress, that now, however, I hoped that the reunion of the separate portions of Afghanistan under its legitimate sovereign would give permanent security to these countries, and restore the extensive commerce to its ancient channels, and thus civilize and enrich the countries of Central Asia. H.E. said: 'But would not the annexation of Kandahar and Herat to Persia in the manner proposed have had the same effect, and in a more advantageous manner, by establishing there a power with which we have already formed our relations, commercial and political?' I replied that the attempt to establish the authority of Persia in Afghanistan appeared to be quite incompatible with the preservation of tranquillity in that country, that the religious and natural antipathy between the Persians and the Afghans was too strong to make it possible for Persia to exercise authority there except by force, and that I did not believe her to be strong enough to affect it by such means; that therefore to annex in the manner proposed Herat and Kandahar to Persia would have been to perpetuate anarchy in those countries; that probably H.E. had been deceived by the avidity with which the Chiefs of Cabool and Kandahar had sought the Persian alliance, and even expressed a readiness to form an equal alliance with the Shah. But the fact was that these Chiefs had no hold on the Afghan nation, and had been raised to, and maintained in, their authority by a powerful body of Persians in each of these cities, which had become a dominant faction there. That, resting almost solely on this support, and fearing the popular predilection for the old Royal Family, these

Chiefs and their Sheeah advisers had sought, naturally enough, to strengthen themselves in the country, and to give the Persian faction a permanent domination by forming this connection with Persia. That from such a state of things no permanent tranquillity could be expected, and that we were deeply interested in every way in the tranquillity of Afghanistan ; that, however, it was probably useless to discuss the matter now, as by this time it might be presumed our troops were in Kandahar, and the whole matter settled. H.E. expressed some surprise, and pointedly put the question : ' Do you think it too late to propose any modification of your plans in Afghanistan ?' I replied that unquestionably such was my opinion, and that if nothing unexpected had occurred, I could not doubt that the affair was already settled. That while we were on this subject, I thought it right to say that I had learnt with great surprise the present proceedings of M. Vitkavitch at Kandahar, to which place he had carried money to a considerable amount, and where he was doing much mischief quite gratuitously, and I presumed without authority. H.E. admitted that V. had been the bearer of 10,000 tomâns to Kandahar, but did not say whether from the Shah or the Russian Minister, but H.E. stated in the most pointed manner that Duhamel had sent, shortly after his arrival at Teheran, an express Messenger to recall Vitkavitch.

" The conversation then turned on the possibility of extending commerce in Central Asia, H.E. at the same time declaring that V.'s mission had been for objects purely and exclusively commercial. I remarked that it was unfortunate that he had perverted it to other purposes, not only because of the impression his conduct conveyed of the views of his Government, but because it forced us to look with distrust on all persons whom Russia might hereafter send into Central Asia for purposes *purely commercial.* That I was at a loss to understand why Simonitch had taken so great pains to conceal from

us the Mission of Vitkavitch. To this H.E. made no reply. The discussion on the means of extending commerce was renewed. I observed that I was strongly impressed with the belief that as soon as the Afghan country should become safe for the passage of merchants a large amount of the produce of India would find its way even into Russia through Central Asia, and that thus the old overland trade would ultimately be in part restored. H.E. immediately asked what, in such a case, India would take from Russia in return. I replied that I did not contemplate a trade direct from India to Russia, but that the Kokhara, Afghan, or Persian merchant would buy from the one and sell to the other. H.E. seemed to pay great attention, much more than it deserved, to what I said on this subject.

"The conversation terminated by H.E.'s begging of me, on my arrival in London, to exert myself to get matters arranged with Persia; 'for,' he said, 'it is a disagreeable thing to have them in their present state, and it cannot be conducive to your interests or to ours any more than to those of Persia.'

"Count Nesselrode mentioned that instructions had been sent to Simonitch not to guarantee the Kandahar Treaty—said that, 'Persia having a treaty with Kandahar, and we having advanced upon it, what would Persia do?' I said I presumed she would do nothing. He said 'She *can* do nothing.'

"Press of England—alarms for India. Had I participated in them? Had we not been precipitate? Had we not acted without ascertaining the real state of the case and the true feelings and intentions of Russia? Replied that the intentions must be judged of from the acts. I had been forced so to judge."

When Mr. McNeill reached London, he was exceedingly well received. Mrs. McNeill had come up to town from Edinburgh to meet him, and on 13th March, 1839, she wrote to her sister-in-law, Mrs. R. S. Wilson:

"John is in great favour with the powers that be, and the Queen was most gracious to him. She complimented him on his safe arrival, feared that he had had a disagreeable time of it, and regretted that he had been unwell, and asked if he thought that it was the climate that had disagreed with him. He made some allusion to its having been the effect of anxiety caused by his position, when she turned to Lord Palmerston and said: 'Yes, but he did it uncommonly well.' John said he had the greatest difficulty in keeping his gravity when he heard the little girl making this speech. Backhouse, however, informed him that Her Majesty had actually read all his despatches, so that, young as she is, she was able to form some idea on the subject."

The Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath was conferred upon him at this time as a reward for his services.

Several of John McNeill's private letters speak of his longing for rest, and there is no doubt he hoped to rest and recruit his health in his own country quietly, and had left Persia with the intention of not returning thither. His reception in London, however, put this out of the question. The Foreign Office required him to be at hand: he was *the* authority on the Eastern Question in all its phases. Every Persian despatch received had to be referred to him for his opinion, and he frequently drafted the replies.

Of course, no man could receive such marked approval or be in such a prominent public position without having adverse criticism. Many attacks upon him appeared in newspapers. One instance was the publishing of a letter by the *Times*, on 29th October, 1839, signed with his name, and written by someone evidently conversant with Persian affairs, but which was a forgery. He, of course, published a denial next day, but, so far as can be ascertained, the writer's indentity was never discovered. All these attacks were, however, treated by Sir John McNeill with contempt. A letter from E. Hammond at the Foreign Office says:

"Your newspapers amuse me. Pray let them rail as much as they think proper. They cannot injure you either by praise or blame in the estimation of the Southerns, and your North Country folk must have wonderfully divested themselves of their natural acuteness if they do not estimate all the nonsense of the faction at its just value."

The McNeills took No. 2, Stanhope Place, Hyde Park, for four months, and were there throughout the season. The house was "small, but the situation correct, and the furniture beautiful." Little Margaret Ferooza joined them, travelling for the first time by railway train, then a great novelty, and was greatly delighted with "the rapidity of the motion."

Sir John McNeill, as we must now call him, the saviour of Herat, found himself the lion of the London season. His good looks and courtly manner no doubt enhanced the effect of his achievements, and Lady McNeill's wit and cheerful disposition—she had now recovered much in health and spirits from her terrible experiences in the East—made her an excellent hostess or guest. There are, unfortunately, no letters giving an account of their doings, but there is a mention of Lady McNeill's pretty niece, Ann Wilson, looking very well in Persian dress at the Caledonian Ball.

On 29th June Elizabeth wrote to her brother the banker:

"I am the payer-general, and like to know where I may find the needful. Governments are in no hurry as paymasters, notwithstanding all the remarks in the House. H.E. has received no pay as yet since his return, but hopes to receive shortly. We owe about £1,000, although we pay all household matters weekly; but house rents, carriage, and horses, and repairs, necklaces, stars, horse freight, court dresses, and wines soon run up large bills, and of all the ruinous places the West End of London certainly is the foremost."

There are very few letters about this period except those from Colonel Sheil and the other members of the Persian Mission who remained at Erzeroum, in Turkey, also from Colonel Rawlinson in Kandahar, Captain Darcy Todd at Herat, and Sir Alexander Burnes at Cabul. Their letters tell of the Shah of Persia's obduracy in refusing to apologize for the treatment of the British messenger, or to make any amends; of intrigues going on between him and the rulers of Afghanistan; of the disturbed state of that country and the difficulties of consolidating the throne under the unpopular Shah Soojah, in spite of his triumphal entry into Cabul, accompanied by a British army, on 10th August, 1839. The best of these letter-writers, Henry Rawlinson, Political Agent in Kandahar, speaks very openly, fully, and interestingly of his entire disapproval of Lord Auckland's " great political error " in sending the Afghan Expedition, and of his fears of ultimate forced withdrawal of all troops from the country, but even he does not anticipate the complete disaster which befell them. So much has been written about the first Afghan Expedition, in many books, that it is not necessary to quote from these letters here, especially as none of the responsibility for its inception rests on Sir John McNeill. He knew nothing of it till it had been decided upon. As we have seen, he recommended another course—*i.e.*, that of a demonstration of British power in the Persian Gulf, and a treaty with Dost Mohammed. Lord Palmerston, and Lord Auckland, however, thought larger measures desirable. A comment on the wisdom of Sir John's recommendation is furnished in the following extract from Captain L. J. Trotter's book, " The Earl of Auckland," published in 1905, page 214:

" One good thing, however, came out of the Cabool disasters. For thirty-five years after no sane English statesman cared to meddle with the internal politics of Afghanistan. When a Persian army in 1856 once more attacked Herat, a timely alliance with Dost Mohammed

and the march of Outram's army along the Persian Gulf enabled us, at little cost, to compel the retreat of the Persian army from the captured city, and to make the Shah's Government sue for peace on our own terms."

When the London season was over the McNeills went to a cottage at Portincross, near Kilbride, in Ayrshire, and paid visits to Lord and Lady Belhaven at Wishaw, the Campbells at Garscube, and other friends. At Garscube they met the Duke and Duchess of Argyll, "the former as agreeable as usual," and Mure of Caldwell, "a remarkably intelligent and agreeable man." Sir John McNeill bought No. 53, Queen Street, the house in Edinburgh which had been the home of his wife's family during his college days, and he and Lady McNeill took the greatest pleasure in having it done up and furnished. A marble bath, which cost £115, was put in, said to have been the first fixed bath in Edinburgh. He had brought home beautiful embroidered material for covering furniture, made at Yezd: this was made up with rosewood, and was very unique and pleasing. The members of the Mission in Persia had presented him with some handsome pieces of plate, and there are letters regarding many purchases for the home. The picture of a young woman by Sir Joshua Reynolds he wished to buy for £20, and asked his wife, "Is it too much?" But Lady McNeill was of opinion that £20 would be better spent in having a bust of himself, or of little Ferooza, from the chisel of Mr. (afterwards Sir John) Steell, and she had her way. He was frequently called up to town when Persian despatches arrived, and in the following winter he appears to have been constantly in London, at the Athenæum Club, while his wife and daughter remained in Edinburgh. On 10th January, 1840, he wrote his first penny-post letter—to Lady McNeill. In it he says:

"The impression seems to be that Persia will now yield, and that the Mission will return to Teheran. . . .

I suspect they contemplate calling upon me to go out again for a short time to put matters in train there, and if I could connect my acquiescence in their wishes with some arrangement to give me employment at, or nearer, home on my return, I should not regret it. It is very possible, however, that before things are arranged in Persia there may be some change at home which will cause other views to be acted upon (*i.e.*, a change of Ministry). I have been to the theatre, and saw Macready in 'The Stranger.' He is a respectable actor, nothing very brilliant that I could discover, but nothing to shock or offend one. Irish Power acted the same night; he is capital in his way."

Another letter giving a glimpse of his London life is dated 20th January, 1840:

"I wrote to you on Saturday, my beloved, and also answered Piggy's letter. We had a very pleasant party at Murray's—Mr. Elphinstone,* Mr. Fullarton (a very clever Indian), Lockhart, and Professor Wilson of Oxford (also a learned Indian), and Sir G. Wilkinson, the Egyptian. Last night I was at Bandinel's, where we had a most agreeable party, chiefly of diplomats—Lord Elliot; Mr. Aston, Envoy to Madrid; Mr. Temple (Lord Palm's brother); Mr. Strangways, and Mr. Charles Greville, a well-known man both on the Turf and in Downing Street; and last, not least, Captain Sabine, whom you have heard of. We did not part till past one this morning. The matter about which I came up to the Foreign Office will, I think, be finished on Saturday, and on that day Farrant will, in that case, start for Erzeroum. All my suggestions have been adopted, though in respect to one point I differed from Lord Palmerston, and recommended that what he had written regarding it should be struck out of the despatch. This was very good-natured of him,

* The Hon. Mountstuart Elphinstone, Commissioner for the Settlement of the Deccan, 1817-1819, Governor of Bombay, 1819-1827, whom he had known in India.

and very complimentary, of course, to me. The Eastern Question is to be one of the subjects of debate on the 28th, and I am told that some of my friends have prepared an attack on me. Let them try it. If Ministers can't defend themselves and me on that ground, they deserve to be well beaten. It is not generally believed that Ministers will be turned out; on the contrary, the impression seems to be that Sir R. Peel has agreed to this motion rather for the purpose of convincing his own impatient followers that the time is not yet come when they can get into office. But there will be a grand debate, I have no doubt."

The Murray with whom he was dining was John Murray, the second of the great publishing family, the friend of Byron and of Scott, and founder of the *Quarterly Review*. They had been introduced to each other in 1834 in the following amusing note from John Gibson Lockhart:

"DEAR MCNEILL,

"'Tis always pleasant to bring two great lives together. Allow me the honour of presenting to you John Murray, the Emperor of Bibliopoles."

CHAPTER XVII

LAST TERM IN PERSIA

1841, 1842

At length the Persian Government gave way: Ghorian was evacuated, reparation for the arrest and ill-treatment of the messenger was given. Lord Palmerston immediately sent orders that the British troops were to evacuate the island of Karrack. In June, 1841, Sir John McNeill once more left home for Persia. To his eldest brother, Alexander, who was then living in Oronsay with his wife and children, he wrote from Edinburgh, 26th April, 1841:

"You would hear from Duncan and Malcolm that I was under orders for Persia, and I am obliged to be in London by the 7th May for the purpose of completing the arrangements for my departure. There is, therefore, no chance of my being able to see you before I go, and I must beg you to give my love and Elizabeth's and Ferooza's to Anne and your little people. I do not expect to be absent above a twelvemonth, and during that time Elizabeth will not be in Scotland, for she has been recommended to take Ferooza to Malvern for the summer, and to the South of France for the coming winter, not as a measure of necessity, but as one of precaution.

"If all goes right, I hope to spend the autumn of 1842 with Elizabeth and Ferooza in Argyleshire, and part of it with you, if you will have us."

Leaving his wife and much-loved little girl in Boulogne, he and the third Wilson nephew, Benjamin, whom he

describes as "a chip of the old block, game to the backbone, and as wiry as one of Dandie Dinmont's terriers," drove through to Marseilles, day and night, without having their clothes off or being on a bed or couch. They went from thence by steamer to Malta. At Malta they were joined by Charles Scott (second son of Sir Walter Scott, the great novelist), who accompanied them to Persia. There is nothing to show in what capacity he was attached to the Mission, but there is evidence in letters of his having been employed by the Foreign Office. From Malta they went via Athens to Constantinople, where they saw Sir Stratford Canning, the new Ambassador. Thence they went by Trebizonde, Erzeroum, Tabreez, and finally Teheran. Lady McNeill, writing to her brother, says:

"I received a letter from John yesterday, of date 2nd October, from a place called Khoisumdurrah, which I remember well from having once got a fright from a mad bull there. It is about seven days from Teheran. They seemed to have progressed very slowly, owing to Mr. Scott's illness. Poor fellow! he has been very ill, having had gout, rheumatism, liver, and dysentery at once; but he was so much better that they expected to be off in two days. John had ordered a *tukht* [litter] for him, and I do trust, when he once gets to Teheran, the mild, dry air there will soon restore him."

The expected change of Government had not taken place before Sir John McNeill left England. When he reached Trebizonde, news of the elections reached him.

To his Wife.

"*8th August*, 1841.

"You will have seen that the elections have gone against the Government to such an extent as to make a change of Ministry certain, and it is quite possible that the Persian Government, aware of that fact, may desire to postpone the adjustment of their matters with us till

a new Government has been formed in England, because, from Lord Ripon's speech,* they will hope that the new Government will be more favourable to them, and less so to me. That the Conservatives, who have denounced the policy of Ministers in Afghanistan, may be more easily dealt with in respect to Herat, and that the Hagee may be able to get rid of me when a Government is in office which disapproves of my proceedings, for so they will interpret Lord Ripon's speech against me. But I am so fully convinced that no Government can make any material change in the policy that has been pursued by the present Government, either in Persia or in Afghanistan, that the Hagee may find that he has been calculating without his host. At all events, his speculations on a change of Government in England shall not in any degree influence my proceedings, and I trust I shall be able to carry out my instructions at once, so as to be quite free to return home in the spring."

This anxiety, however, proved groundless. A great change for the better came over the spirit of the authorities in Persia. The British Envoy was now received with marked attention and profuse expressions of friendship by all classes. A better understanding had been established also between Russia and Great Britain, and Count Medem, who succeeded General Duhamel, had used his influence to bring about the restoration of friendly relations between the Persian and British Courts. On 3rd February, 1842, Sir John McNeill wrote : " The good understanding between us and the Russians at the moment is not agreeable to the Shah's Government, but it is very valuable to us, and I hope it will be preserved."

Very soon after his arrival he was able to announce that the Commercial Treaty between Persia and England was signed and ratified on 28th October, 1841.

* Speaking in the House of Lords, 22nd February, 1841, Lord Ripon called Sir J. McNeill's wisdom, though not his motives, in question, and moved for the publication of all correspondence between Her Majesty's Government and the Court of Teheran.

Since the time of Sir John Macdonald this treaty had been the subject of many diplomatic efforts, and it must have been very gratifying to have accomplished it at last.

To his Wife.

"TEHERAN,
"*20th October*, 1841.

"It would have been gratifying to me, my dearest, to have announced to you that the Commercial Treaty was signed and ratified on the 28th had I not had to tell you at the same time that poor Charles Scott had breathed his last on the same day. This you will have been in some degree prepared for by my last letter. Ben and all the rest of our party are well. Poor Charles Scott was buried by the side of our sweet Eliza in the Armenian Church here. May God in His mercy preserve to us the one that is left! I have now completed the most important object of my Mission, and consider myself at perfect liberty to return to you in the spring if it please God to spare us all till then. This is a satisfactory wind-up to my diplomatic labours, and is the evidence of the success of the whole line of policy for which I can be considered responsible. The friendly relations between Great Britain and Persia are now, I hope, established on a more stable basis than they have been since the present Shah mounted the throne. . . .

"You cannot imagine what a relief it is to me to have that Treaty off my hands, done in the precise way required. I hardly thought that I could gain anything by coming out here, and I felt I had something to lose. I can now feel satisfied that, so far, I have at least lost nothing. It is true the Treaty was promised by this Government before I came out, but it was also promised more than once before I went home. Nothing can exceed the kindness—in manner, at least—of all the leading people here, especially the Hagee, who abused me so much at one time. Old Fatty, now Minister for Foreign Affairs, has behaved splendidly throughout, and the

whole thing has been arranged without one unpleasant word."

"Fatty" (Mirza Abdul Hassan Khan) consulted Sir John McNeill about his will. Among the proposed behests was one of a considerable sum for his own funeral rites, and for "purchasing prayers of holy men for the rest and happiness of his soul." Sir John begged of him to think of his poor relations rather than of his own dead body.

"Is it not strange," he says, "that the mind of man should be so prone to deceive itself as to the motives of its own actions? The Khan very well knows that it is charity which the Koran tells him will open to him the gates of Paradise. He will not give it during his life, and he bequeaths a sum of money at the cost of his heirs for the express purpose of having these gates opened for himself. Is this charity? Is it not as exclusively selfish a proceeding as it is possible to imagine?"

From Lord Palmerston.

"Carlton Terrace,
"31*st January*, 1842.

"My dear Sir John,

"I am much obliged to you for your letter of 1st November, and still more so for the Treaty which you have succeeded in negotiating with the Persian Government. This is a brilliant finish to the foreign policy of the Whig Government, and places British interests in Persia on a most satisfactory footing. I am very sorry, however, to hear that your health has suffered from the effects of the Persian climate, and that you think that you may be obliged to return home again. But as you have now settled all our differences with the Persians, a less able head might henceforth hold the reins, and as we should have found it very difficult to select a good man to succeed you, I don't think that the present Government are more likely to make a satisfactory choice. I can well believe that our successes in Afghanistan and in

Syria, and the good understanding which has sprung up between England and Russia, must have produced a strong effect upon the minds of the Shah and his advisers, and must have brought them to think that it is better to be our friends than our enemies. The true way for a nation to have friends is to be strong enough not to want them. I think you were quite right to give the Persians the presents which you mentioned upon the signature of the Treaty, but what Lord Aberdeen* thinks upon such matters is now of more consequence than what I think, but I cannot doubt his sanctioning what you have done. Possibly the Shah of Persia may think that Bushire is not much more capable of defending itself than Canton and Amoy, and he may know that his coast is nearer to our possessions than the Chinese coast is.

"My dear Sir John,

"Yours sincerely,

"PALMERSTON."

At the opening of the new Parliament the reconciliation with Persia was agreeably mentioned in the Queen's Speech.

Over two years had passed since Shah Soojah had been placed on the throne at Cabul. Success appeared to have attended the Afghan Expedition. The country seemed to have accepted him as their ruler, and to be settling down; the British troops were about to be withdrawn. There were those who knew there was only an outward appearance of quiet, like Henry Rawlinson; but Lord Auckland and Lord Palmerston had no suspicions, and Sir William MacNaughten, Political Agent in Cabul, was blind to the signs around him. Even John McNeill was for a time satisfied that all was well, but just as he thought his work was over, and that he could leave Persia at peace with her neighbours, and Russia entirely checked by our seeming triumph in Afghanistan, and by the entire failure of her own expedition against Khiva

* His successor at the Foreign Office.

under General Perofski, news of the rebellion in Cabul began to come through. His letters to his wife had for months been full of joy over the prospect of his return, and of the approaching end of their separated life. "Separated, but not disunited," round a design of two linked hearts, is cut on an old seal of theirs. But there was still a time of anxiety and uncertainty before them. The news of disasters in Afghanistan came slowly, and at first uncertainly, till vague rumours were confirmed, and by degrees the appalling truth of the annihilation of the entire Cabul force* became known. Sir John lost several personal friends, among them Sir Alexander Burnes and Captain Edward Conolly. Robert Wilson, Lady McNeill's nephew, was in Afghanistan in command of a portion of Shah Soojah's cavalry. His safety was for a long time unknown to his family. There is no full description of what took place, but Sir John McNeill's remarks in a subsequent letter to his brother-in-law show that Robert distinguished himself: "What a noble boy Robert is! I always knew he had it in him, but nevertheless it is a cause of satisfaction and pride to see him exhibiting on every occasion and in all circumstances the most exalted qualities."

From Lady McNeill.

"PAU,
"BASSES PYRÉNÉES,
"*21st March*, 1842.

"Short and low in spirit, dearest, as your little epistle of 27th January certainly is, I was most thankful to be awakened by its arrival at half-past seven this morning; for my heart yearned for a letter, and the Afghan news brought by the last two mails has been so harrowing that sleep has been almost a stranger to my pillow and peace to my waking hours. Dear Robert, I trust, is safe. God grant it! It appears by the Indian papers that he had been in action with Captain Leeson's force—date from Kandahar was 28th December—and had been

* 5,000 men and 12,000 camp-followers.

allowed by his men to go on alone with his standard-bearer. No officer, however, is mentioned as having suffered at all, so, please God, he has been spared. Your knowledge of him was a good deal later than any of his letters home, so I wrote instantly on receiving it. Sir William MacNaughten and many others, as you will see by the papers, are now added to the list of those who have fallen victims to the present awful state of affairs in Cabool. Everyone, even those who have no one individually dear to them in the East, are full of lamentation at the overpowering nature of our disasters in Afghanistan, and no one seems able to conjecture what may be the final result of it. The details given in the Indian and home newspapers are terrible beyond anything one could have formed an idea of, but no doubt are somewhat exaggerated and warped by bitter party feelings. Lady Vaux feels much for her uncle, Lord Auckland, who has to remain in India until the arrival of Lord Ellenborough. One of her aunts writes to her he is in very low spirits indeed. Thank God you are so far from those bloody scenes ! I fervently trust you will not be longer detained in Persia. Your counsels at home would be quite as useful as they are there, and by my calculation any despatch making such a request would hardly now reach you *in* Persia."

Sir John feared that news of the British losses in Afghanistan would have a disturbing effect in Persia, and he therefore decided not to leave for home so soon.

To Lady McNeill.

"TEHERAN,
"*26th April*, 1842.

"You see I am still detained here, though my baggage is all gone, and I expected to have been to-morrow at Tabreez. Unfavourable intelligence from Afghanistan has been pouring in so fast that it was impossible for me to move with any comfort or confidence, though I am

happy to say everything is quiet here, and the Shah has behaved uncommonly well. . . . This detention from week to week is most fatiguing and disagreeable. . . ."

In another letter he says :

" This must be our last separation. Nothing I can imagine would ever induce me again to go abroad alone, and I have no anxiety ever to be employed again in these distant countries, or even in those nearer home. I shall be quite content to settle down quietly, and not to seek employment, and not to accept it unless something very tempting should present itself unasked, which is not probable."

No account of this part of Sir John McNeill's life would be complete without speaking of the very great affection which existed between him and his little girl, now eight years old. In every letter he speaks of her, and in every letter from Lady McNeill there is much about his " Pettie," or his " Piggy," as he calls her.

From Lady McNeill.

" *23rd August*, 1841.

" Your Pettie goes on as well as possible. She has agreed, as our hearts could wish, with Boulogne, and is very good and like herself again, and this, I trust, will continue. She is a creature that for love will do anything, but with severity nothing, and by the former system I am determined she shall be educated. My mother never said a harsh word to one of us in our lives, and one of the greatest comforts of my existence now is the remembrance that I never willingly offended her, but returned by obedience to her wishes her just and unvarying life of exertion for our sakes. . . . She [Ferooza] was dreaming of you the other night, and called out so loud that she woke me. She asked if you were really home. She had dreamt you were, and that she was giving you such thousands of kisses."

From Sir John McNeill.

"*8th August*, 1841.

"I am getting too old, and have been too comfortable and happy, to be able to endure this kind of life. We must reduce our pretensions to our means, and be quiet at home or travel very soberly abroad. I really cannot go on with this kind of thing any longer. I am never present in mind here, but always, whether sleeping or waking, with you and my Pettie. On the morning of the 13th I half woke with an entire conviction that Ferooza was in my arms, and reasoned upon it till I was quite satisfied that it was no dream. The hammering of a tent-peg near my head dispelled the delusion. Give her the kisses I intended for her then.

"Kind regards to all, and believe, ever beloved, in the true affection of your own

"JOHN MCNEILL."

At length he was able to write definitely that he was leaving in May, 1842. He sent in his resignation to Lord Aberdeen, and the following is the reply:

"FOREIGN OFFICE,
"*21st June*, 1842.

"I have received and laid before the Queen your separate despatch of 25th April, stating that you propose to set out for England on the 7th May, and that it is your intention on arriving in England to resign your appointment as Her Majesty's Envoy at the Court of Persia; and I cannot omit on this occasion to state to you that Her Majesty's Government greatly regret that the state of your health, which I have already learnt from you is the principal cause of your desiring to resign your Mission, should have the effect of depriving Her Majesty's Government of your valuable services at the Court of Persia."

From his Wife.

"PAU,
"*19th February*, 1842.

"The wee woman was like to go out of her wits for joy, kissed her little letter a hundred times, and said: 'Really, mamma, I feel as if this letter was papa himself!' She put it into her pocket, and kept flapping her side to remind me it was there, and showed it to everyone who came in."

From Karanieh, 19th May, 1842, on his way home, he wrote:

"I have hardly had time to realize all the pleasure it affords me to find myself again free, and fairly out of harness, without discredit or loss of reputation, and I have hardly yet been able to look forward as to a reality to the prospect of being with you and with my darling Piggy in so short a time as I shall be if it please God to prosper my journey."

The following is a report of his last interview with the the Persian Prime Minister and his farewell letter to the Russian Minister:

"TEHERAN,
"*11th May*, 1842.

"MY LORD,

"I have the honour to inform your lordship that I had an interview this morning with H.E. Hagee Meerza Aghassee, at which H.E. the Minister for F.A. was also present, for the purpose of communicating to the Prime Minister the substance of certain portions of your lordship's despatch, No. 16, of the 24th March.

"After a conversation of some length H.E. Hagee Meerza Aghassee desired me to assure your lordship that the Persian Government was very desirous to cultivate the most friendly relations with the British Government, and that personally he was particularly anxious to establish between the two Governments the most cordial intercourse and the most intimate connection.

"H.E., in answer to some observations I had made, then pledged himself to me in the most formal and solemn manner, calling upon the Minister for F.A. to witness the promise, that even if the Mission to Khiva should fail in effecting an amicable arrangement of the differences between Allah Kooly Khan and the Shah, and should return without having effected anything whatsoever, no military expedition would be undertaken against that Principality, and no large force would be sent to Khorassan on any pretext whatsoever without further communication with the British Government. That I might rest perfectly satisfied that no step would be taken by the Persian Government which could in any manner affect unfavourably the interests of England. That as Persia had now endured for above thirty years the captivity of her subjects in Khiva, she would endure it for one or two years more if necessary to give time for the settlement of Afghanistan.

"I asked H.E. whether it was his wish that I should report this promise officially to your lordship or consider it as a private understanding between himself and me. He replied that I might exercise my own discretion on that point, but that he was a man of his word, as I should find on this occasion, and he then of his own accord took a most solemn oath strictly to fulfil the promise he had made me.

"He further said: 'I conjure you by all that you hold most sacred—by God, by the Lord Jesus, by the head of your Queen, and by the life of your only child—to tell your Government to put out of their minds all feeling of distrust regarding the intentions of the Persian Government or respecting my personal feelings towards England. We have seen nothing but benefit to Persia result from our connection with England—nothing, nothing but evil from her alienation, and for myself there is nothing so precious or valuable in my sight but that I would readily relinquish it rather than lose the cordial friendship and support of Great Britain.'

"H.E. concluded by saying: 'We had thoughts of sending an Envoy to England, but now that you are going I feel assured that we could send no one who has the interests of Persia more sincerely at heart than you have. You have spent a great portion of your life amongst us, you have rendered important services to three generations of our Sovereigns, and after all that has passed I can still say that there is no European for whom I have feelings of friendship so strong as I have for you. You have always taken a manly and open course, and I know that if you wished it you could not divest yourself of the kind feelings which the associations and recollections of twenty-five years must have produced.

"'You will pass through Constantinople, and I beg you will there endeavour to promote the adjustment of the questions still unsettled between us and the Turkish Government. I have directed a letter to be written to you on this subject, and I hope you will induce the British Ambassador there to facilitate as much as he conveniently can the amicable adjustment of these questions.'

"To this statement I endeavoured to make a suitable reply, and assured H.E. that the British Government had always been, and continued to be, most desirous to promote the best understanding between Persia and Turkey, because it could not fail to be highly advantageous to both these parties, whose strength and security Her Majesty's Government were most desirous to advance.

"I have to apologize to your lordship for having given so full a report of this conversation, and especially of the parts of it which relate to myself, but it appeared better to give your lordship every facility I could give in forming an opinion on the value to be attached to the statements and assurances of that extraordinary man, who certainly impressed me with a more favourable feeling of his sincerity, as far as it could be judged of from his manner, on this than on any former occasion.

"I have the honour to be, etc.,

"JOHN MCNEILL."

Farewell Letter to his Russian Colleague, Count Medem.

"TEHERAN,
"*10th May*, 1842.

"MONSIEUR LE COMTE,

"It affords me great pleasure to send you the enclosed extract, which I read to you this morning from a despatch received yesterday from Lord Aberdeen. You will perceive that it directs me to express to Your Excellency the acknowledgments of Her Majesty's Government for your seasonable co-operation with me, which has so much contributed to induce the Persian Government to adopt a reasonable course on the two important questions regarding Afghanistan and Khiva on which it has lately been called upon to decide.

"Permit me at the same time to express to you, M. le Comte, my personal feelings of obligation for the manner in which all the business we have had to arrange in concert has been conducted, and my hope that Colonel Sheil, who will be presented to the Shah as Chargé d'Affaires previous to my departure on leave of absence, will receive from you the same cordial co-operation which has been so acceptable to the British Government and so agreeable and advantageous to me."

Lady McNeill and Ferooza, with Mrs. Gibb, the servant who had been with them in Persia, a governess, and a manservant, had been at Pau most of the time since Sir John's departure. They eagerly waited for his return—that final home-coming which meant so much to his wife. She sent letters to every possible place he might stop at on his way, and in enclosing one to Mr. Cartwright at Constantinople, says:

"Oh, how glad I am that we are nearly done with the East! No doubt in worldly matters it has been a lucky country for us, but I would not again go through the tear and wear of heart it has cost for ten times its value."

They had pleasant society at Pau, amongst whom were Lord and Lady Henniker, the Duchess of Gordon, Mrs., Miss, and Miss Louisa Hay, Miss Sally Fitzgerald, Lord and Lady Vaux (the latter a niece of Lord Auckland's), Mrs. Gardiner (*née* Grant, of Rothiemurchus), etc. The child was learning French rapidly, and was improving in health. Their happy anticipations lasted until July—they had heard from some points of the safe journey of Sir John and Ben Wilson—when suddenly Elizabeth received a hasty summons to Auch, where her husband lay suffering from the effects of a serious carriage accident, and it was uncertain if he would live. She found him in the hotel at Auch, with the Vicomte de Noé—a French gentleman whose château was near Auch—taking care of him. This gentleman had sat up with him two nights, and "acted like a brother." Fortunately, the results of the accident were not so severe as was feared at first, and Ben Wilson was uninjured. In three weeks Sir John was able to continue his journey to Pau, and wrote as follows to Lord Aberdeen :

"*5th August*, 1842.

"My Lord,

"I have the honour to report that, having set out from Constantinople on 20th June by way of the Danube, which enabled me to avoid the delay of performing quarantine, I had advanced to the city of Auch on the route between Toulouse and Pau, with the intention of conveying my family from hence to England, when, on the evening of the 5th July, while descending a hill about four miles from Auch, the post-horses attached to my carriage became unmanageable, and, having gradually increased their pace to nearly their utmost speed, ran so near the edge of the road that one of the wheels passed off it, and the carriage and horses, with the postilion, my courier, my nephew Mr. Wilson, and myself, were hurled with great violence down a precipitous bank about thirty feet high. Prompt assistance was afforded us by some peasants who witnessed the accident, and I find it

difficult to express my feelings of obligation to Mons. Alexandre, the innkeeper at Auch, and to all the authorities, civil and military, of that town for their unremitting and valuable assistance during the ten days I was lying there. It is my duty, however, more particularly to mention the very kind attentions of the Vicomte de Noé, who promptly offered his assistance as soon as he heard that an Englishman had met with an accident, and who remained with me two nights while it was yet uncertain whether or not I could recover. The serious injuries I sustained by the fall of the heaviest part of the carriage upon me in its descent made it impossible for me to continue my journey to London, where I expected to have arrived in the first week in August, and the small progress I have yet made towards recovery, although three weeks have elapsed since the accident, makes it probable that it may still be several weeks before I can undertake the journey to England.

"In these circumstances I have thought it right now formally to tender my resignation of the office of Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary at the Court of Persia with which Her Majesty has been pleased to honour me; and to beg, if there should be no objection to such an arrangement, that my resignation may be held to have taken place on the 12th August, the day on which I contemplated resigning [his forty-seventh birthday] had I been able to prosecute my journey as I originally intended.

"As soon as the state of my health will permit, it is my intention to proceed to England, and I take the liberty of soliciting, through Your Lordship, Her Majesty's permission to remain in this vicinity until my medical advisers shall have thought me sufficiently recovered to proceed with safety."

Lord Aberdeen, in his formal reply, accepts the resignation from the 12th August, and adds: "It may be grateful to your feelings that I should repeat upon this

occasion that your conduct during your last Mission to Persia has merited and earned the full approbation of Her Majesty."

Extract from a Private Letter from Lord Palmerston, dated 13th November, 1842.

"I am sorry for the sake of our National Interests in Persia that you have given up the Mission in that country, but I am afraid that your health has suffered from the climate. I can have no doubt, however, that the present Government must have been as well pleased and satisfied as we were with the great zeal and ability with which you invariably performed all the duties you had to discharge. I can assure you that we all felt very much obliged to you for the good services which you did your country while acting under us. I am glad to see that the Shah seems disposed to listen to reason in regard to his differences with the Turk, and I hope that he has put off *sine die* any renewal of his trip to Herat."

The following quotation from Sir Henry Rawlinson* will suitably finish the chapter:

"This settlement was opportune. If it had been delayed six months longer, Russia would hardly have proffered the same earnest mediation; nor would the Shah's obstinacy have been so easily overcome. If we had still been in a state of quasi-hostility with Persia at the close of 1841, it would have required something more than a mere moral pressure to right ourselves at Teheran. Even with six months of preparation, Sir John McNeill must have found it a difficult business to meet the first burst of the Cabul disaster; and the more so as the Persians, with the usual proneness of Orientals to personify all measures of policy, insisted on fixing upon our Minister the individual responsibility of their failure at Herat, and he thus had to encounter the irritation and ill-will of

* "England and Russia in the East," pp. 65, 66.

almost all the classes with whom he was brought in contact at the Court. That under such circumstances—at a season when our Indian Empire had sustained a blow which, in the estimation of those who best knew its strength, shook it almost to its foundations—and acting at Teheran with one of the ablest and most astute officers who ever represented Russia in the East (Count Medem), Sir J. McNeill should have held Persia firm to her engagements; that he should have carried the Commercial Treaty; and that he should have put our relations with the Shah upon something of their ancient footing, must be regarded as not the least meritorious achievement of his distinguished career. In the spring of 1842 ill-health compelled him to abandon Persia. He had been employed for nearly twenty-four years in that country, and during that interval had raised himself by his unaided talent and energy from the humble rank of an Assistant Surgeon in the Company's army to that of a civil Grand Cross of the Bath—a bright example of the Indian services. So high, indeed, was the character he had earned for himself with the Ministers of the Crown that when he retired from the East, he merely exchanged his diplomatic functions for an office of equal honour, and of more utility, under the Government of his native land.

CHAPTER XVIII

THREE YEARS OF LEISURE

1842—1845

The McNeills remained on the Continent during the summer of 1842, Sir John slowly recovering from the effects of his accident. They crossed from Paris in October, and, after a week in London, went to their own house in Edinburgh. They enjoyed a well-earned rest from public work for three years. For the first time since their marriage, twenty years before, they could enjoy a quiet, normal life together in their own country, and within reach of their relations and friends, who were numerous in spite of their long residence abroad. Living in Edinburgh also were two of his brothers—Duncan, the Solicitor-General, who remained a bachelor; and Archibald, Writer to the Signet, who was married and had several children. Robert Sym Wilson and his large family were living at Gogar Mount, near Edinburgh.

Both Sir John and Lady McNeill were very hospitable, and No. 53, Queen Street soon became known as a place of pleasant entertainments. Some delightful glimpses of their life are given in the "Journals and Correspondence of Lady Eastlake," published in 1895, from which the following are extracts:

"On Wednesday I dined at Sir John McNeill's, and found a select small party in the most charming rooms, which were fitted up entirely in Persian materials, and decorated and painted in arabesque. The host and hostess are delightful. Sir John is splendid, noted for being the

handsomest and proudest man in Edinburgh ; he adds the finest person and carriage to beauty of feature, so that he really is a rare specimen. . . .

" 31*st January*.—Out to dinner. Sir John McNeill talked wisely and well : spoke of Unitarianism ; the tendency of all those who have been accustomed to prove all they believe, to reject whatever is beyond the pale of ' sensuous proof.' But what nonsense this is ! . . .

" 11*th February*.—We have had a delightful evening at Sir John McNeill's, who, I begin to find out, is one of the most agreeable and elegant-minded men in the world. He likes to get upon Church topics, and he and his wife have become stanch Episcopalians ; and as he is famed for his gift of speech, it is quite a privilege to have his conversation and watch his splendid face besides. We had a charming party at Lord Murray's the next evening, with exquisite music ; Lady Murray is a great musician and lover of Beethoven. I had Sir John all to myself during the whole of the Septet, which I thought shorter than usual. . . .

" 17*th March*.—To the fancy-dress ball at Lady McNeill's ; the rooms a blaze of light, showing off sweeping trains and flowing veils, nodding plumes and sparkling eyes—setting off good taste and exposing bad."

A story of this ball, which is not told by Lady Eastlake, is that Mr. Cockburn, wine-merchant, and Mr. Nasmyth, a famous dentist, arrived dressed as Polish gentlemen, but had forgotten to provide themselves with suitable names. A wit supplied the deficiency by loudly announcing, " Count Caskowhiski and Count Pulltuski." To continue Lady Eastlake's reminiscences :

" Sir John told me that Mr. Lockhart had written to Professor Wilson ' to cultivate Miss Rigby [Lady Eastlake] ; she is of the right stuff.'

" 27*th March*.—To the Erskines'—a large party—Lady McNeill charming ; told her I caught sight of her jewel above all the crowd (meaning in her turban). ' What,

my husband?' said she. Sir John delightful; defined truth and politeness, with his usual exercise of these virtues—true politeness and conventional politeness—where they separate—at most, conventional politeness is better than none; for, do what we will, there will ever be but few who can discriminate where its exercise becomes the greatest rudeness, and where its absence the truest politeness. Sir John defined a despot 'as one who does not like to hear the truth,' and so we are all despots in our way. . . .

"*2nd April.*—The McNeills had a most delightful charade party last Tuesday. The acting and dialogue were so excellent that the charade became of no importance. It was mainly done by four gentlemen, advocates of celebrity and talent here, whose practice in speaking gave them the requisite confidence. As they took the ladies' parts as well, and a tall man, 6 feet 2 inches, and proportionately stout, represented Miss Mary Ann Walker, the female Chartist, in the costume of a lady, you may guess the roars of laughter that ensued. The whole audience was wellnigh exhausted with excessive laughter, and it was pronounced that never had charade-acting been carried to such perfection before. Sir John and Lady McNeill are delightful hosts, and have done a great deal of good in Edinburgh by knocking down much exclusiveness."

Unfortunately, Lady Eastlake's records are the only ones of their social life, and now that they were no longer separated, and were living so near their relations, there are almost none of the intimate private letters which have hitherto afforded so many glimpses of their thoughts, feelings, and doings. Letters from Colonel [soon to be Sir Justin Sheil, and to be formally appointed Envoy to Persia, though with reduced salary and staff] show that Persian affairs were quiescent. Other old correspondents in the East continued to write to their old chief, especially Henry Rawlinson, then Resident at Bagdad, whose letters are full of his archæological discoveries, and of his

having been able to decipher cuneiform characters of great age, especially at the site of the ancient city of Babylon, in which he was assisted by Henry Layard.

Among many letters from John Gibson Lockhart, Laurence Oliphant, and others, space only permits of very few extracts being given. Lockhart nearly always wrote amusingly, and in a letter he wrote while Sir John McNeill was still in Persia, after recommending him to read "Life and Manners of Ancient Egypt," by Wilkinson, he continued :

"Little else has appeared but the usual mushroom crop of novels—the rapid growth of vicious hotbeds, and stinking ere you pickle them. The Rev. Mr. Lebas says he can compare the present Government to nothing but a Druidical rocking-stone, which a child can shake, but no giant can displace. Lady Louisa Stewart* laughed when I told her this, and said she had a conceit of her own. 'I should liken Lord Melbourne,' said she, 'to the old conqueror that would put his hand into the hive without a glove, and though there ensued a world of hissing and bumming, none dare sting him, because he has the queen-bee at his feet.' Worthy of a granddaughter of Lady Mary Wortley in, I believe, the eightieth year of her age ; and on my soul, I take it these two jokes are sufficient for our Parliamentary and political history of the year of grace 1838."

J. G. Lockhart must have been a most lovable character. As we have seen, Charles Scott died at Teheran. He left a note, to be opened after his death, addressed to his brotner-in-law, of which the following is a part :

"My dearest Lockhart,

"I find on searching my drawers a letter addressed by me to my sister Sophia, to be opened, as this will be, after my death. It has been my misfortune to lose that

* Daughter of Lord Bute and friend of Sir Walter Scott—the only woman admitted to the secret of the authorship of the Waverley Novels.

kind sister, so I address this to you, together with a draft of my will. . . . May God bless you for all your brotherly love and kindness to me!"

Many of Sir John McNeill's friends expected that he would be asked to succeed Lord Ponsonby as Ambassador to the Porte, but he had himself a clearer conception of the value set upon his work by those in authority, and indulged in no vain hopes. Writing to his wife from Persia, he said :

" Whatever ambition I may have, rest assured that my first ambition is to see you and our sweetest dear little Daw comfortable and happy, and to be happy with you and in you both. If I can but succeed in acquitting myself creditably of the charge confided to me, I shall be content with the success of my public career, and though I know that you have sometimes questioned, as I myself have done, how far I could with prudence sink quietly down to spend the rest of my days in comparative idleness, I feel quite convinced that with a little quiet travelling on the Continent, especially in Italy, and then a house in the vicinity of Edinburgh, I could be as happy, if it please God to spare us all, as a man could reasonably hope to be. . . . I expect no public employment on my return. I have had my reward, and am satisfied."

In reading his private papers, one finds evidence of his seeking out those of his friends who had fallen into poor circumstances, and helping them with a generosity which is rare—in two instances at least by pensions for life, when they had really no claim upon him at all. There were money troubles in his own family, and he gave thousands out of his hard-earned and carefully-saved capital to try to put things right. In this his banker brother-in-law helped him, till at last Elizabeth wrote to Robert Wilson : " John, however, seems quite determined that neither he nor you shall suffer more."

He took great trouble to aid any of the young who were

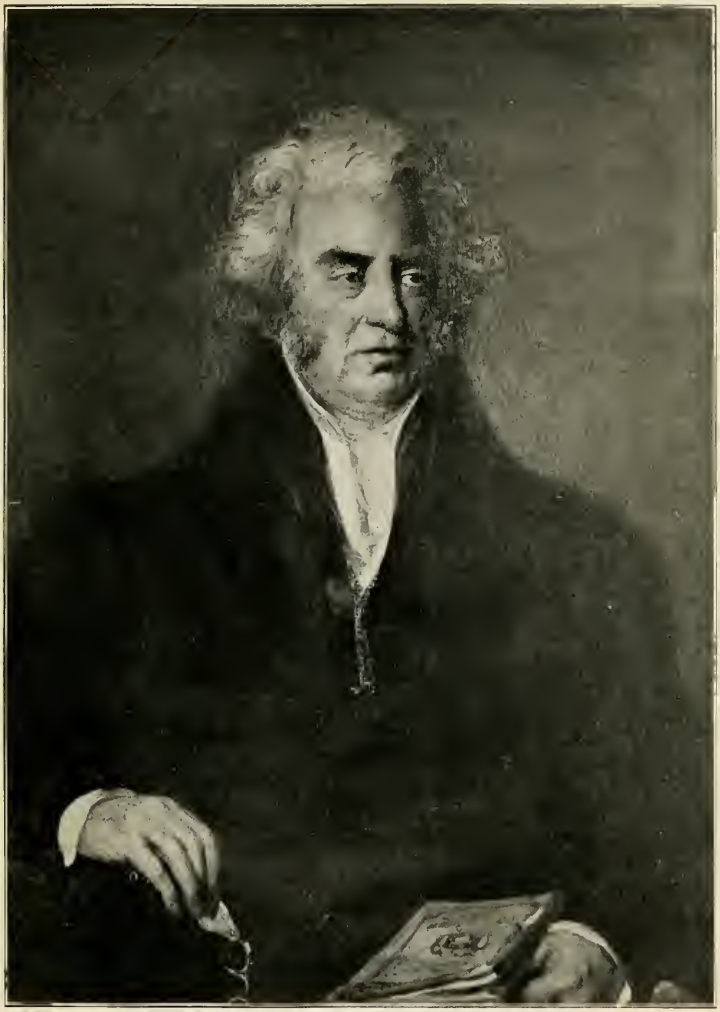
starting in life by using his influence upon their behalf, and by advising, encouraging, and helping them. There are numerous letters asking his assistance, and even more thanking him for substantial kindnesses ; among them Sir Henry Rawlinson writes : " I owe everything in life to your kindness and support."

Sir John's opinion upon the cause of British failure in Afghanistan was given by him in an article in *Blackwood's Magazine*, reviewing " Military Operations in Cabool," by Lieutenant Vincent Eyre. He there says :

" In the measures we adopted to establish the authority of Shah Soojah we attempted to carry out a system of government which could only have been made successful by a total revolution in the social condition of the people, and in the relative positions of classes ; and as these revolutions are not effected in a few years, the attempt failed. The system, unpalatable as it was to the nation, might no doubt have been carried through by an overwhelming military force if the country had been worth the cost ; but if it was not intended to retain permanent possession of Afghanistan, it appears to us that the native Government was far too much interfered with ; that the British Envoy, the British officers employed in the district and provinces, and the British army, stood too much between the Shah and his subjects ; that we were forming a Government which it would be impossible to work in our absence."

After Lord Auckland's return from India, Sir John and he met and talked of recent Afghan affairs. Lord Auckland, in writing to his own secretary, said :

" You will, of course, not hesitate to put Sir John McNeill confidentially in possession of any further information in your power which may be interesting to him. No one has a better right to consideration from me, and it is due to him, who has played so great a part in the politics of Persia, that he should know all that has passed which can have any bearing on those politics."



JOHN McNEILL, THE "OLD LAIRD."

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Sir John McNeill's active mind was, however, turning more and more to interests at home. He was one of the Committee for the Scottish National Memorial to the Duke of Wellington, and it was due to his representation that the sculptor, John (afterwards Sir John) Steell, was chosen to execute the work. He argued that it should be the work of a Scottish artist, if possible, but met with considerable opposition. The memorial took the form of an equestrian statue in bronze, which was erected in front of the Register-House in Edinburgh.

He read a memoir of Sir Charles Bell, the great anatomist, brother of his own tutor, Dr. John Bell, before the Royal Society in Edinburgh in April, 1843, which is described by one of his audience as " being composed in excellent taste and feeling, . . . the picture . . . such as could only have been drawn by an admiring hand, and that an able one." There is mention of his making an admirable speech at the great Burns Festival at Alloway in 1844, at which " the company comprised almost all that were famous in Scotland for literature, science, and art."

In May and June, 1843, he was in Colonsay, watching his mother's life slowly and painfully ebb away. He spoke in his letters to his wife of her wonderful calm and cheerful resignation. " God's time is the best," she said. In the following January there is again a letter to his wife from Colonsay, the reason of his being there being evidently his father's ill-health. There was no doctor resident in the island, so no doubt his presence was especially helpful. The old Laird lived till 1846.

Sir John spent a good deal of his time in writing. There is a letter from Macvey Napier, editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, sending a substantial cheque (fifty guineas) for an article in the 165th number ; also some letters from Mr. John Murray, in one of which he says :

" The approbation of a diplomatist so well versed in all that relates to Oriental matters from personal experience

as yourself was, as you may suppose, not a little flattering to the author of the paper in the *Quarterly Review* on Turkey, and was very satisfactory to its publisher. . . . With his consent, I am permitted to tell you that Henry Layard is the writer."

To a generation which has seen a Russo-Japanese war a remark of Mr. John Murray's in another letter is of interest :

" It cannot be unknown to you what effort the Czar is making in the direction of Japan—a race with the Americans. I have been positively assured that the Military Mission sent last year to Pekin offered to the Emperor of China the use of an army to put down his rebels on the condition of the payment of two provinces (names not known) by way of compensation !"

In the autumn of 1845 the McNeills hoped to realize a long-talked-of dream of spending a winter travelling in Italy, but once again the call of duty interfered. This time, fortunately, it did not entail prolonged separation or residence out of Scotland. Sir John McNeill was appointed Chairman of Her Majesty's new Poor Law Department, the Board of Supervision for Scotland, in August, 1845.

CHAPTER XIX

THE BOARD OF SUPERVISION

1845—1850

It is necessary before continuing, to look into the circumstances which led to the passing of the Act by which a Board of Supervision for the Relief of the Poor in Scotland was appointed in 1845.

"Compulsory assessment for the support of the impotent poor was at a very early period permitted in Scotland."* It was by the Act of 1579, in the reign of James VI., and so was nearly contemporaneous with the measure of somewhat similar import in England which originated in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. In England, however, it was designed to force those "obstinate persons" who, after they had been "charitably and gently persuaded" by the Bishops to give voluntarily, still refused to aid the "impotent, feeble, and lame"; while in Scotland it was designed mainly "for securing the suppression of common begging," but was "in practice construed as an Act of security to prevent the risk of the poor in any parish suffering from want of funds to support them." This early Act was rendered practically void because "a strong feeling in opposition to a legal assessment existed in Scotland, and the clergy in general strenuously exerted their influence to prevent recourse being had to any compulsory mode of raising funds for the relief of the poor." "The collections at the churches had been in use from the earliest periods of the Scottish Ecclesiastical Establishment, and were recognized in the

* Report of the General Assembly, 1839.

Acts of Parliament both as an ancient and *legal* resource for the maintenance of the poor."*

Therefore, in 1843, "church collections, with such small sums as might accrue to the Kirk Session from the fees, fines, etc., aided in a few instances by occasional donations from heritors or casual visitors, formed the only public fund to which the poor 'cruiked folk, sick folk, impotent folk, and weak folk' could look for relief." The funds were administered by the Kirk Sessions—*i.e.*, the ministers, elders, and heritors or their factors, to whom in purely burghal parishes were added the magistrates, and there were no paid inspectors or elected members on the administrative committees or boards.

The administration was under this system very variable. In some parishes where the heritors took personal interest in the poor funds were well managed, in others the relief was ill-administered. Then, too, funds were apt to be plentiful in the parishes where there was least poverty, while in the rapidly growing manufacturing towns the money given by heritors, who were voluntarily or legally assessed, was altogether insufficient to meet the needs of such increasing numbers of poor. A period of depression throughout Great Britain set in in 1838, and continued with more or less severity throughout the five following years,† so that general and in some cases great distress prevailed, causing much hardship to the people, and much anxiety to the administrators. Public attention became aroused; the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland appointed a committee to inquire, and reported to the House of Commons in 1839; a "Society for Obtaining a Government Inquiry into the Administration of the Scottish Poor Law" was formed, and men of influence, such as Dr. Alison, Dr. Chalmers, and others, preached and wrote upon the subject. Opinions varied as to the remedy, but there was a general feeling that the

* Report of the General Assembly, 1820.

† Sir George Nicholl's "History of the Poor Law," vol. ii., p. 373.

provision for the poor was very inadequate except in a few parishes. Dr. William Pulteney Alison, brother of Sir Archibald Alison the historian, was Professor of Institutes of Medicine at the Edinburgh University, 1822-1856. In 1840 he published a pamphlet to show how the existing inadequate provision for the poor led to desolating epidemics throughout Scotland. He was altogether in favour of money being assessed by law for the support of all poor, even those who were able-bodied but temporarily out of employment, and of having paid inspectors of the poor and workhouses ; also of Kirk Sessions and those who administered the poor funds being placed under some supervising body. Dr. Thomas Chalmers, Professor of Divinity in the Edinburgh University, formerly of St. John's Parish, Glasgow, on the other hand, strongly opposed legal assessment and legal administration. " To legalize a scheme for pauperism is to pauperize the whole population," he said. He was a splendid organizer, and an enthusiast. He had put into operation in his parish in Glasgow with conspicuous success a system by which applications for relief were largely reduced, the spirit of independence and thrift greatly encouraged among the poor, and the spirit of true charity and compassion developed among those who could assist their neighbours and relatives. He held that relief should go hand-in-hand with the teaching of Christianity. " Whenever you superinduce Christianity, you stimulate and quicken into activity the natural good principles," he said. Therefore, he was against paid inspectors, elected members of Poor Law Boards, and any legal right to relief except in the cases of lunatics, deaf and dumb, and other incurables, whom he would have relieved thoroughly and adequately at public expense.

On 26th January, 1843, a Commission was appointed by Queen Victoria to make a full and diligent inquiry into the practical operation of the laws which provide for the relief of the poor in Scotland, and on 2nd March they commenced taking evidence. Lord Melville was at

the head of the Commission, and their Report was issued on 2nd May, 1844. It was an exhaustive inquiry and made many recommendations, but the one which was to lead the subject of this Memoir into a new field of activity was that which recommended that " a Board of Supervision should be appointed." The Inquiry Commissioners intended that the Board should be established for a limited period only, that all its members should be unpaid. It was to receive reports from every parish board at least twice a year, study these reports, receive complaints, exercise the fullest powers of inquiry and remonstrance, and report annually to the Secretary of State on the condition and management of the poor throughout Scotland—a considerable amount of work to expect from unpaid officials !

The outcome of all this was that on 2nd April, 1845, Duncan McNeill, then Lord Advocate, introduced in what is described as a " comprehensive and luminous speech " a Bill in the House of Commons, which was well received " without distinction of party," and which was placed on the Statute Book on 30th August of the same year. In the introductory speech he said " there was an evident need of some central power to keep the local authorities in motion, and the public had no opportunity of ascertaining the conduct of these authorities in distant parts of the country. In order to remedy these evils, he proposed that in every parish a person should be appointed whose duty it would be to attend to the condition of the poor, to keep a list of the persons entitled to relief, and to distribute the amount awarded to them ; and he proposed, further, the appointment of a central authority, to which the local authorities in each parish could make regular reports of their proceedings, and which should exercise a general supervision over all the parishes in the country."

The central authority appointed was the first Board of Supervision. It consisted of three Commissioners appointed by the Queen—Sir John McNeill, Chairman,

Mr. Home Drummond, and Sir George Macpherson Grant, the two latter being carefully selected one from each political party, in order that the Board should have no political bias. All other members of the Board, of whom there were six, were termed ex-officers in the Act. Mr. Home Drummond had been one of the Inquiry Commissioners in 1843. Mr. Smythe of Methven was appointed Secretary.

The Act which then became law has been in operation ever since, with only one slight amendment regarding settlement. The great distinction between it and the Poor Law of England is that no able-bodied persons can legally receive relief in Scotland except temporarily in exceptional circumstances.

There is a letter dated 2nd July, 1840, from Dr. Handyside (Secretary of the Society for obtaining a Government Inquiry) to Sir John McNeill, asking him to return certain papers anent Scottish Poor Law matters, which shows that the subject held Sir John's attention even before his work in Persia was finished. This, and the fact that he spoke Gaelic fluently, fitted him in a special manner for the work. The first meeting of the Board was on 4th September, 1845, and the first month was occupied in organizing and constructing the Parochial Poor Law Boards in the provisions of the new Act. This was a matter of some difficulty, as, for instance, " there was no accessible means of ascertaining through what channel the official correspondence of each Parochial Board was conducted, or by whom they were called together. . . . In some parishes the new Act was altogether unknown, and in a few cases the circular letters remained unopened for some time because there was no one in the parish who considered himself entitled to break the seal." The Parochial Boards were required, by Section 32 of the Act, to meet on Tuesday, 16th September, 1845; but sometimes the meetings did not take place, because there was " no individual in the parish who considered it his special duty to call the Board together." Eight hundred In-

spectors of the Poor were appointed during the first year for the 878 parishes into which Scotland was divided, some neighbouring parishes sharing one Inspector. In 1842-43 only 230 parishes raised their poor funds by legal assessment, but the first year after the passing of the Act 448, or more than half, the parishes gave up the voluntary system.

The Board of Supervision first sent a circular letter enumerating the duties required of the Parochial Boards; they then "framed and circulated rules for the guidance of Inspectors"; next they called upon the Parochial Boards to choose by which of the various modes legalized under the Act they wished to be assessed; after that they issued "Regulations for Conducting the Elections of Managers in Burghal Parishes." They note that "elections which have taken place under these regulations have been conducted without confusion or difficulty of any kind," yet all this they accomplished in spite of innumerable attendant details and difficulties in all the 878 parishes in about six weeks—*i.e.*, between 4th September and 20th October. This result was arrived at largely by the great care with which letters of instruction and forms with questions to be answered were prepared; everything was made as clear and easy for the Parochial Boards as possible, and the questions were framed in such a way that the right sort of information reached the supervising Board, much lengthy and needless correspondence being avoided.

The field of work which it was the duty of the Board to supervise was a wide one; it included every sort of care of every class of poor person throughout Scotland, their housing, funds for their support, their health, education in the case of children, removal to their own parish, inspection, combination or division of parishes, election of Parochial Boards, vesting of property in new Boards, industrial schools and reformatories, and the care of lunatics. They also received complaints from paupers of inadequate relief, of which there were 597 in the first year, sent directly to the Board of Supervision through

the Inspectors, and a further 456 in about ten months, sent to the Sheriffs of the different counties. Nor did their work end there, because, though the law did not provide relief for the able-bodied unemployed, still, at times of exceptional distress a great deal of the work of organization of special funds to meet the need, and means, such as emigration, to deal with it, fell under the only fully competent and fully authorized body in Scotland—the Board of Supervision for the Relief of the Poor.

In studying the first Report, issued at the end of what must have been a very hard twelve months' work, one is struck by the absence of red-tapism and the elasticity of the interpretation of the Act, their common-sense decisions, and their policy of non-interference with the Parochial Boards in the execution of their duties.

It is difficult in these days of well-ordered pauper lunatic asylums, workhouse hospitals, and thoroughly organized poor relief in every parish throughout the country, to realize how very different was the state of affairs which the new Board found in existence sixty-six years ago. A few extracts from the Inquiry Commissioners' Report may help :

"Neil Gilchrist, maniac. In a dark closet, a damp earthen floor, and a little straw on the floor, with one blanket for his bed. No clothing but a blanket over him. Chained to the wall by a chain round his ankle. His bedstead was taken away because he tore it to pieces and attacked the family with it. He stands almost constantly. Is at times very violent. His father has £2 10s. from the parish for house-rent for the family. The house consists of one room besides the closet for the maniac. One boy able to do for himself. One of the daughters is silly, but able to go about. All sleep in the same room, some of them on shake-downs. The maniac is quite dangerous. The Sheriff does not know the state he is in."

This is one of five specimen cases quoted by the Commission ; it would be easy to multiply similarly distressing

stories from the evidence given by witnesses before the Commissioners.

Under the old system, the responsibility of proving their legal settlement fell upon the paupers themselves, and great hardship was caused by the removal of paupers from the parish in which they applied for relief to the parish where their supposed settlement should be, each parish trying to foist them on another when there was doubt. One of the cases quoted is from the parish of Annan. The Clerk to the Heritors knew of "one old woman who was sent back upon them six or seven times, and after being sent out at one end of the town, was carted round the country and sent into it again at the other. He believes that the old woman was carted from one place to another till she actually died travelling. . . . She was in a dreadfully filthy state last time he saw her, when she was laid down by those who brought her upon the street."

The allowance given in such a case as that of a widow with six children under twelve, one of whom she was nursing, was only 3s. a week; for a couple of aged persons, 1s. 3d. for the two. Begging or stealing, or both, was therefore absolutely necessary; they had to do so or starve. The urgent need of asylums for lunatic paupers, of whom there were 1,621 who had not been placed in any licensed establishment in the year 1845, and of poor-houses "for more effectually ministering to the wants of aged and other friendless paupers, and especially for those who, from vicious or dissipated habits, were likely to misapply their allowances," was one of the first things that called for the energy of the Board. Glasgow had its town's hospital and a house of refuge; Edinburgh and a few other towns had charity workhouses; but in such considerable towns as Perth. Dundee, and Greenock there was nothing of the kind. Parochial Boards were slow and unwilling to take steps to build houses for the poor, though, under Section 62 of the Act, they were enabled to borrow money on the security of future assess-

ments for this purpose. At the end of the first year there were still 1,148 cases of pauper lunatics remaining to be disposed of; the no doubt large number of aged, friendless, vicious, or dissipated paupers unprovided for is not given. In their first Report the Board of Supervision say:

"Although we have been strongly impressed in the course of our proceedings with the advantages which both the poor and the ratepayers in many parishes would derive from the erection of poor-houses, either singly or conjointly with other parishes, we have abstained from pressing this opinion on any Parochial Board. We do not doubt that experience will lead them to the same convictions that have forced themselves on our minds."

Though unable to remove pauper lunatics to suitable asylums, the Board did much to improve their state by insisting that the allowance made to a person in charge of a lunatic was "adequate to provide proper accommodation and care, that a medical man should certify that this accommodation and care were satisfactory, and that the Inspector of Poor should exercise a general superintendence over the pauper lunatics residing in the parish, and report to the Parochial Board, or, if necessary, to the Board of Supervision, any irregularity he observed.

In this short glance at some part of the first year's work of the new Board, one is inclined to think, with Dr. Alison, that the poor of Scotland were to be congratulated upon the passing of the Act and upon the appointment of the supervising Board; also that all the results of their work were good; but in their own Report is a paragraph which entirely justifies the opposition expressed by Dr. Chalmers. On p. xxiii of that Report they say:

"We regret to state that since the legal provision for the poor has been extended, and more uniformly and systematically enforced under the recent statute, parties legally bound to maintain their poor relations have manifested a greater disposition than formerly to evade this

obligation, and to throw the whole burthen of supporting even their parents and their children on the parish."

Among the papers there is only one which gives us a glimpse of the McNeills' private life at this time. It is a small note-book of Lady McNeill's, marked outside, "Journal of our *dolce far niente* Life at Ardlussa with our kind Brother the Dean of Faculty," and it gives an excellent picture of Highland country life and sport in 1847. Ardlussa was a family property in the Island of Jura; the Dean of Faculty was Duncan McNeill, afterwards Lord Colonsay.

"*Friday, 13th August*, 1847.—Proceeded by railroad to Greenock, where we passed the night; next morning, at eight o'clock, proceeded to Ardrishaig, where we found two carriages awaiting us, and, having secured a roast leg of lamb and a bottle of port wine from the busy landlady, we had a beautiful drive along the banks of Loch Sween, and at Tayvallick found the barge and a baggage boat in readiness to convey us across a glassy sea, and arrived, with thankful hearts, at Ardlussa, in good time for dinner. The Queen and suite being expected at Inveraray, the Dean, as Member, had to go to present the Address from the county, and did not arrive at his own beautiful dwelling till Thursday, the 19th. Mr. John Stuart (of Ballihullish) had arrived the day before, much to the gratification of the small circle here. Immediately a Chasse was proposed, we all accompanied the party to the first hill of observation. The Dean had brought from Inveraray with him two very agreeable young students—the one, Mr. Lascelles, third son of Lord Harewood; and the other his friend Mr. Style (intended for the Church), both from Oxford. They had taken a small shooting-box between Inveraray and Loch Awe, called Craiginoor, and were pretending to study there with a tutor said to be nearly as young as themselves. The first Chasse proved rather a failure, and the dogs brought down a fawn only. For some time a stag has occasionally been in the habit of

feeding with the cows, and had acquired the name of Thomas. Tom, however, had of late become very troublesome, and had wounded several persons, one rather dangerously. The keeper was therefore desired to watch him, and report when he next appeared. This happened on Friday, 20th, and, being on a pasture not far from the house, the ladies and children were invited to witness the sport. The dogs were slyly stationed at different points, and all slipped as soon as the noble creature bounded off. It very soon outstripped them all, but, running towards the sea, the dogs finally forced it in, and it was captured, not without difficulty, by two boats. They fixed ropes round the horns, and dragged [it] to the valley again, and let it loose, but from fright and exhaustion it was soon overtaken by the dogs, and the huntsmen ended its pain by cutting its throat. This was an easy Chasse, with plenty of excitement and no fatigue; not so the first, by which Sir John was much knocked up and unable to come down to dinner. His spirit far outdoes his strength, and constantly leads him to over-exertion.

"*23rd August.*—The young gentlemen left us to-day, and expressed themselves highly gratified with their visit. Ferooza literally runs wild here, and seems strengthening every day. John Carstairs* is the only one of the party from Colonsay; he is turning a strong, manly fellow. The boat returned before lunch, bringing the charming addition of Mr. Fletcher of Dunans to our small circle.

"*24th.*—Fine grey day, with occasional showers. Our first week here was uninterrupted sunshine and heat, and the sea remained a mirror of smoothest glass; but on the eighth day a storm arose, and did considerable damage to the haycocks, and blew branches of gooseberry bushes from the garden right over the house. The noise was tremendous, and kept me awake almost all night. The angry look of the sea in the morning made one heave a sigh for the bold and brave who so nobly guard our native

* Afterwards Major-General Sir John Carstairs McNeill, V.C., etc., Equerry to Queen Victoria.

isle. A great haul of fish was taken to-day, and we all went to the shore to see them picked out of the still net. The gentlemen then went to the hill with the dogs, but the day continued too misty, and the gentlemen returned very wet, and without having had any Chasse. In their absence, Mr. John Mundell arrived, and brought (without invitation) two ladies, whom he introduced as his sister-in-law and wife's cousin. Soon after their arrival in the midst of wind and rain appeared young Ion [Ian] of Islay, who had come from Port Askaig in an open boat, and was thoroughly drenched, but as happy and handsome as ever.

"25*th*.—Mr. Mundell and party took their departure after breakfast, and the gentlemen all went to the hill. . . . The gentlemen had a famous Chasse to-day, and brought home a fine buck, who received the *coup de grâce* from young Islay. After the rain, the midges have revenged themselves on us in a most fearful manner. They are the only *désagrêments* of this sweet, peaceful spot, where reigns brotherly love and true hospitality.

"26*th*.—We went to the shore to see Mr. Fletcher off, and a great blank he will make. His conversational powers are of the first order, his good-humour constant, and his fancy ever bright. His powers of mimickry quite, I think, unequalled.

"27*th*.—Young Islay and John Oronsay left us early this morning in a small Norway skiff belonging to the former, good enough for fine weather, but hazardous enough in the heavy sea that brought him here. He was much delighted with the Chasse of yesterday, said to be the best run they have ever yet had. He declares he will never forget the bringing down of the noble stag, with six deer-hounds all hanging on one side of him, the other side being towards a wall. Gentle pity seems to form no part of the excitement of these manly sports, though the *coup de grâce* leans that way. It is delightful to see young Ion of Islay so hardy, so full of glee, and all pleasing qualities. His handsome countenance and the

form of his neck, shown by his Highland garb, strongly remind me of his charming, graceful mother. This day is rainy, and bids fair for indoors amusements alone.

"28*th*.—The gentlemen went to the hill, but came home without a stag. We went to meet them, and rough enough work it was thro' the heather and bogs. Sir John went to the river before dinner, and got a fine salmon-trout.

"29*th*.—After Morning Service in the dining-room we took a stroll thro' Tornaroch (the Mount of Serpents), and visited the six lovely little does. They are quite tame, and at present are fed by White, the keeper, chiefly on cow's milk. . . .

"30*th*.—The Brethren went to the hill this morning at six o'clock, and did not return till half-past four in the afternoon. It was a thick, misty day, with frequent showers, but they all declared it was pleasant in the hill, and they brought down a stag and a doe of good size. Thank God Sir John stood his ten hours and a half most famously, and, although no fatter, is clearer in complexion, and feels very much stronger than when we arrived in this enchanted isle.

"31*st*.—Sir J. made an early start to-day, being called away by 'the Board.' He went in the barge, as it was too calm for sailing."

Lady McNeill and Ferooza were detained by a gale, but left a few days later, and the journal closes in these words: "Thus happily ends the autumn trip of 1847. Praise be to God!"

In June, three years later (1850), the wreck of the steamer *Orion* brought sorrow to many, but to none so terribly as to the McNeill family. Captain Alexander McNeill, Sir John's eldest brother, his wife, two daughters, and two sons were on a pleasure-trip. Between one and two in the morning the steamer ran on Barnaugh Rock, near Port Patrick, and began quickly to fill. The father and boys were in a forward cabin, and they immediately

went and got the mother and sisters on to the highest part of the then sloping deck. As they stood there an oar was seen floating past, and Alick, the younger son, aged sixteen, being the strongest swimmer, jumped in to get the oar to help the others. The tide was very strong, and when he came to the surface he had been carried far, and the ship had disappeared. He found his brother, John Carstairs, near him, and helped to save him; but father, mother, and sisters were drowned. Sir John McNeill went at once to Port Patrick, brought the two lads back to Edinburgh with him, and made all the arrangements for the sad fourfold funeral in the island of Gigha, which then belonged to Captain McNeill.

Sir John and Lady McNeill shortly after left their Edinburgh house, and took a long lease of Granton House, then a charming place, on the shores of the Firth of Forth, about three miles by road from town. Here the two bereaved lads and many others often spent their holidays. Many friends came to stay, many entertainments were given, and here their little daughter grew up —a happy home for nearly twenty years.

CHAPTER XX

THE POTATO FAMINE

1851

THE ordinary routine of Poor Law work and of social intercourse does not afford anything of special interest, but circumstances had arisen in the Highland districts which demanded special investigation, and Sir John McNeill himself undertook to make it in 1851.

In 1846 a blight, which ruined the potato crop, spread over Ireland, England, and Scotland. The potato, as a field crop, had been common in England for many years, but it was not grown in Scotland, except as a rare garden vegetable, till after 1770. In the Highlands and islands, where the climate made cereal crops most uncertain and troublesome to harvest, the potato quickly became the chief food of the people.

The population in the twenty-seven parishes with which the inquiry was concerned—*i.e.*, the nineteen island and eight mainland parishes, where the potato famine was most felt—had increased from 42,342 in 1755 to 85,949 in 1821, and from that to 99,004 in 1841.* The land of itself could not support this enormous increase, but by turning the seaware into kelp, which secured large prices, the people were enabled to live. From 1822 onwards a succession of measures ruined the kelp trade. The duty on salt was removed, and that on barilla, pot and pearl ash, and foreign sulphur greatly reduced. These fiscal changes brought distress as early as 1836-37—that is to

* The population in 1821 is given to show that even after the kelp trade ceased to be profitable the population continued to increase.

say, ten years before the potato-crop failed—and £80,000 was raised by the Government and the public for relief in the Highlands. Some of the men at that time learnt to seek work elsewhere, many going to the Lowlands for harvest work, and returning for the winter. The landlords in many instances helped most generously—for instance, Macleod of Macleod to the extent of £2,000 in the spring of 1837, the Duchess of Sutherland at the rate of several thousands a year till her death. Others, however, saw that such a system only increased the evil of over-population, and they assisted those who would emigrate to do so, and in some cases evicted those who would not. It has been said that no one born since 1846 has ever tasted a potato at its best, that the flavour has entirely changed, and though the disease-resisting potatoes now grown have almost restored the original plentifulness, still, we have little idea of what the loss of the abundant, easily-grown, floury, and delicious tuber meant to a people already in straitened circumstances, whose staple food it had been for seventy years. When the housewife went to dig a potful to boil for dinner, she found only rotten, uneatable roots, under a mass of blackened, evil-smelling shaws.

From 1846 to 1851 the public again responded splendidly to the cry of distress from the Highlands. Money was subscribed in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, British Guiana, and other colonial possessions. London gave large sums, so that Mr. Skene, at the office of the Highland Destitution Committee in Edinburgh, was able to send thousands to the local clergy and others to distribute in the distressed parishes. The Parochial Boards were specially reminded that the law preventing able-bodied persons from receiving relief was so framed that in such exceptional circumstances the able-bodied could be temporarily relieved, and thus be prevented from becoming legally eligible through incapacity. Besides this public relief, those Lairds who were able again supported their people. To enumerate a few out of many,

the following sums were in each case given in addition to the whole revenue of the estate between 1846 and 1850: The Duke of Argyll, on his Mull property, £1,790 11s. 4d.; on his Tiree property, £4,680. Lord Dunmore, £1,171 6s. 8d., and also divided the old tacksmen's farms into crofts; while Lady Dunmore expended some thousands encouraging home industries in Harris. Colonel Gordon, of Clunie,* in South Uist and Barra, expended £4,834 5s. On Gairloch property £10,000 was spent. Sir James Mathieson, in Lewis, expended in six years £101,875 7s. 11d. in most carefully-thought-out relief-works, calculated to increase the produce of the island, and £5,892 6s. 2d. in gratuities, over and above the whole revenue for those years. It was hoped each year that the potato disease would not return. For four years the relief continued, then the Highland Destitution Committee's funds were exhausted, and still the disease did not abate.

At a meeting on 16th January, 1851, of the Board of Supervision it was decided that the time had come when the Government could advantageously take steps in regard to the existing destitution in the Highlands. It was arranged, with the Prime Minister [Lord John Russell's] and the Home Secretary [Sir George Grey's] approval, that Sir John McNeill should personally conduct a special inquiry in the districts principally affected. For this purpose he set out on 3rd February, and returned on 10th April, having investigated the condition of twenty-seven Highland parishes.

He set out upon a stormy winter's day, driving, via Lochgoilhead and Inveraray, in incessant rain. At Oban he was detained by bad weather, which for two days prevented his crossing to Mull in an open boat—the only means of transport. Seasick and cold, Sir John, his servant, and Mr. Peterkin, a Poor Law official, were put ashore on the coast, and walked to the nearest inn.

* Father-in-law of Lady Gordon Cathcart, present owner of the property including the now notorious island of Vatersay.

There was but one bedroom, with two uninviting-looking beds in it ; but when the innkeeper was asked if he would not provide a separate room for Mr. Peterkin, he replied that the Duke of Argyll and Lord Blantyre had slept in that room—" one in one bed, and the other in the other." What more could they wish ? Food at another inn consisted of salt herrings, beef, ham, a few potatoes, and oaten bread ; no eggs nor milk. It is not surprising that an attack of fever and ague was the result. Fortunately, however, H.M.S. *Comet* was put at Sir John's disposal. He soon joined her, and was enabled to visit the different places on a stormy and difficult coast in mid-winter with comparative ease and safety.

The population of all these districts consisted chiefly of crofters and cottars, but there were also tacksmen, who generally paid rents exceeding £50, and some of them several hundreds a year. The part of the population not immediately connected with the cultivation of land was small, consisting of clergy, professional men, inn-keepers, shop-keepers, and tradesmen. There were nowhere any manufactures, except a little knitting, the manufacture of kelp having for some years been almost entirely abandoned.

The method of procedure was to call together the members of the Parochial Boards, which were generally composed of the most intelligent persons in the district, and to discuss the questions in public, other resident inhabitants usually being present. As great interest was taken in the matter, persons of all classes attended. The discussions were carried on partly in English and partly in Gaelic. A good deal of excitement and too much warmth would sometimes be shown. This, however, was easily overcome, and " the ultimate unanimity of opinion at which they arrived after full explanation of each other's meaning was really remarkable."* Besides these meetings, Sir John examined persons of all classes—crofters,

* Report by Sir John McNeill on the State of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, 1851.

cottars, ministers, factors, tacksmen, everyone who could give him information—privately. In every case, whether public or private, he wrote out the evidence given him, read it over to the witnesses, and had it signed by them. Vague and unreliable statements were thus reduced to a minimum. The Report which he issued is extremely interesting, extraordinarily far-seeing in its conclusions, and represents a very great amount of labour. Being a Highlander himself, and familiar with their language, he was able to get at the real state of matters and the true feelings of the people themselves.

"It is due," he says, "to the working classes in the parishes I have visited to state that their deportment was uniformly civil and obliging, even in circumstances that might have produced feelings of discontent. They had very generally formed or imbibed erroneous and exaggerated notions of their rights, and especially with reference to the occupation of land, and to some supposed obligation on the part of the nation, or of the Government as representing the nation, to provide them with employment and the means of subsistence where they reside, and thus to relieve them from the necessity of going from home to look for employment. There was an impression or belief that the aid they had received for some years was but the fulfilment of some such acknowledged obligation. Almost everywhere there was confident expectation that the usual relief would be renewed this year. Each year they had been told that relief was to cease, and every succeeding year it had been renewed, and so they believed it would be now. If all other sources failed, they believed that the Government—which hitherto, they said, had done nothing for the Highlands—could not refuse to provide the comparatively small amount of assistance they required when so vast an amount had been given to Ireland. They contrasted their own loyalty and respect for the laws with occurrences in that country, and asked whether it was possible that the Queen, after

doing so much for a rebellious people, who had set the laws at defiance, should refuse all assistance to a people who had constantly been loyal and orderly? They expressed a conviction that their case had not yet been properly represented to Her Majesty, and their hope that I could supply the omission.

"Everything I had to say to them was calculated to disappoint their expectations. I pointed out the erroneous character of the notions they had adopted, and the fallacy of many of their views. I explained to them the true nature and source of the relief they had been receiving, the certainty that it would not be renewed, and that consequently they must henceforth rely upon their own exertions. I told them that, although such intimations might be unpleasant, I thought it better that I should undeceive them than allow them to delude themselves with expectations that could end only in disappointment; yet I did not anywhere observe a tone, a look, or a gesture that indicated resentment or even irritation. They frequently argued freely, sometimes with considerable ability and subtlety, never with rudeness, and often with a politeness and delicacy of deportment that would have been graceful in any society, and such as perhaps no men of their class in any other country I am acquainted with would have maintained in similar circumstances. Many went away dejected, but none without some parting expression of personal kindness or obligation."

Considerations of space prevent more than a short *résumé* and a few extracts from the Report being given here, but its conclusions are as true to-day as they were in 1851. It is still the "final word" on the Crofter Question.

He found that there were so far no cases of actual starvation, though many were parting with their stock and living upon their neighbours. "The readiness with which private charity was given by persons who had

little to spare was very striking and touching," he says. But it was the general opinion that "before next harvest there would be persons suffering from want." "As originally allotted—in the islands, at least—the crofts appear to have been quite sufficient to afford the maintenance of the family and the means of paying the established rent; but when kelp was largely and profitably manufactured, when potatoes were extensively and successfully cultivated, when fishings were good, and the prices of cattle high, the crofter found his croft more than sufficient for his wants; and when a son or a daughter married, he divided it with the young couple, who built themselves another house upon it, lived upon the produce, and paid part of the rent. Thus, many crofts which still stand in the rent-roll in the name of one occupant, who is held responsible for the whole rent, are in fact occupied by two, three, or even in some cases four, families."

Over and over again throughout the Report, in each place he visited, the evidence is repeated—that a small croft, such as was let then for about £5 rent, "does not provide an average family with food for more than six months. . . . These crofters, therefore, as a body, although there may be individual exceptions, are dependent for more than half, and probably for two-thirds or three-fourths, of their means of living on employment unconnected with the cultivation of their crofts. . . . It is a misapprehension," he says, "and one that may lead to many others, to regard them as a class of small farmers, who get, or are now expected or supposed to get, their living, and to pay rent, from the produce of their crofts. They are truly labourers, living chiefly by the wages of labour, and holding crofts or lots for which they pay rent, not from the produce of the land, but from wages. When employment is deficient they are in distress, and if they cannot obtain it at home they must seek it elsewhere, or they will starve as certainly as if they held no land." "The obstinate neglect of this warning,"

says a modern authority, " is the root of the whole crofter difficulty."*

The absence of leases was considered by some to militate against the land being cultivated to the best advantage, but as Mr. Charles Shaw, Sheriff-Substitute in Barra, said in his evidence : " It would border very close upon absurdity to give an improving lease on land which will not keep the lessee's family even in food, in a country where he cannot otherwise earn a livelihood." In Skye there were 3,665 families thus occupying crofts too small to maintain them half a year. To give to each family as much land as would maintain them a whole year would have required more land than Skye could furnish, and would turn out the tacksmen or farmers, who were the only employers of labour.

" In every parish," the Report continues, " with one or two exceptions, men of all classes and denominations concur unanimously in declaring it to be impossible, by any application of existing resources, or by any remunerative application of extraneous resources, to provide for the permanent subsistence for the whole of the present inhabitants, and state that the population cannot be made self-sustaining unless a portion removes from the parish. The signal failure of every attempt that has been made to provide for the population by the expenditure of capital on the improvement of land and the employment of the inhabitants corroborates that opinion."

Having come to this conclusion, Sir John McNeill could suggest but one remedy—a well-considered scheme of emigration. The drawbacks to this were twofold—first, the expense ; and second, the great unwillingness on the part of the people to leave their native shores. The expense, he suggested, could be met possibly by Government loans ; the unwillingness on the part of the people

* Sir Malcolm McNeill, C.B., Chairman of the Local Government Board for Scotland, 1897 to 1904.

was slowly disappearing under pressure of increased poverty and the knowledge that the Relief Committee's funds were exhausted.

One thing which the inquiry brought out most strongly was that the relief given throughout the Highlands and Islands had a very bad effect upon the character of the people. Formerly their pride led them to conceal poverty and value independence ; now they were rapidly learning to parade and exaggerate their poverty, and to place no value upon independence. In Mull the consumption of retailed whisky rose from 8,701 gallons in 1845 to 10,212 gallons in 1850 ; the sum spent upon ardent spirits alone in Mull in 1848 was £6,099 4s. In Skye also the consumption rose by 2,974 gallons, the sum of £7,454 being spent on whisky in 1850. " I have had occasion to see," said the great Disruption minister, Dr. Guthrie, " that morally as well as physically a population exceeding the number who can find full and regular employment is a great evil." " The habit of depending on the proprietor, on the destitution funds, on someone who is to think and provide for them, is one of the most serious impediments to a permanent amelioration of their condition," says Sir John in his Report, " and one of the advantages of emigration to the Colonies has been the effect of new circumstances counteracting this disposition."

The population had decreased between 1841 and 1851 from 99,004 to 92,424, but a much larger exodus than this was necessary.

CHAPTER XXI

EMIGRATION WORK

1852—1854

It is difficult to discover from the papers preserved whether the publication of Sir John's Report produced any definite action by the Government. Apparently it did not do so, and there would have been no sequel had not he and other disinterested gentlemen set to work to collect subscriptions and organize a large scheme of emigration.

An influential committee was formed in Edinburgh, with Sir John McNeill at its head. Mr. T. Fraser, Sheriff-Substitute of Skye, went South, and "laid the foundation of the Highland Emigration Society"—to quote a letter from Sir Charles Trevelyan—in London. At a meeting in the Freemasons' Hall, Great Queen Street, on 3rd April, 1852, a powerful committee was formed, which included the names of Lord Shaftesbury, Sir Charles Trevelyan, Macleod of Macleod, Cluny Macpherson, Baron L. de Rothschild, etc. H.R.H. the Prince Consort became Patron, and very soon sufficient money was forthcoming to accomplish what Sir Charles Trevelyan terms a "social revolution" in the North-West of Scotland. The feeling against emigration amongst the people had greatly diminished, and it soon became a question of choosing among many applicants those who were the most suitable. The secretary of the London Committee was Mr. Standish Haly, but it is Sir Charles Trevelyan's letters which appear most frequently; they are, indeed, almost daily during 1852-53. He wrote from the Treasury, and several times

mentions the interest evinced by Prince Albert in the welfare of the Society and money given by Queen Victoria.

Sir John McNeill threw himself heart and soul into the work. When his Board of Supervision office day was ended, he returned to Granton House to continue writing innumerable letters for the Emigration Society. In this his daughter, then a girl of eighteen, helped him. "No one who has not had a peep behind the scenes," wrote Lady McNeill, "would imagine anything equal to the amount of correspondence it gives rise to. I really marvel at his patience and at his strength in standing so much night work as well as day."

The approved scheme was that the proprietors should be asked to pay one-third, the emigrants giving a promissory note undertaking to repay one-third, and the Society making all the arrangements and providing the rest of the expense. The following letter from Sir C. Trevelyan shows how complete the arrangements were :

"TREASURY,
"*13th August*, 1852.

"DEAR MCNEILL,

"As all the proprietors in the distressed districts except Colonel Gordon of Clunie, upon whose estate emigration has, for the present, been carried as far as it will go, have now given in their adhesion to our plans, it becomes necessary to review our proceedings.

"As regards the number of emigrants to be sent this season, all that need be said is that it should be the largest which we have the means of sending. The stern pressure of real want has become more apparent as we advance, especially in Skye and Harris, even before the reappearance of the potato disease, and thousands are pressing to be sent to Australia. The only question is how many we shall be able to send ?

"The fund actually realized by the London Committee is about £6,700, to which must be added £2,000, the balance of the New South Wales and Port Philip subscriptions, the use of the whole of which we have this season,

making altogether £8,700 ; and taking into account the Glasgow public meeting, the Brighton Bazaar, the Indian and other foreign subscriptions, and the additional English and Scotch subscriptions which may be expected in answer to our further advertisements, I think we may safely calculate upon realizing £10,000 before Christmas.

" Add to this the proprietor's third, and our fund will amount to £15,000.

" At the rate of £3 a head, this would enable us to send 5,000 persons. We have actually sent, including the emigrants by the *Marmion*, 1,250, leaving 3,750 whom we have the means of sending, so far as the funds at our disposal are concerned. In this calculation I have considered the sums raised by subscriptions in Edinburgh and Skye, amounting together to £1,261 8s. 6d., as a reserve to defray the expenses of agency, and to secure the safety of our estimate.

" Practically, therefore, our operations during the remainder of this season will be limited by the shipping placed at our disposal, and by our power of availing ourselves of it in an orderly and regular manner, consistently with proper arrangements for the well-being of the emigrants and the firm establishment of the reproductive character of our fund, and also taking care to avoid any unnecessary disturbance of the existing arrangement of society in the distressed districts.

" The emigrants by the *Marmion* have been completed from Mull and the islands and mainland in the immediate neighbourhood.

" The next ship is the *Allison*, which has been placed entirely at our disposal. She will contain about 330 emigrants of all ages, and will sail from Liverpool to Port Philip on, or soon after, 2nd September.

" Your first care, therefore, will be to assign to the *Allison* a sufficient number of emigrants from among those who have been passed by Mr. Chant, and you will probably do this by appropriating to her the remainder of those who have been passed in Mull and its neighbourhood

who will not be sent in the *Marmion*, and by completing the rest from Skye. I shall be obliged by your giving precise instructions on this point to Mr. Crawford of Aros, and Mr. Fraser, the Conveners of the Mull and Skye Committees.

"It was intended that the next ship should be the one to Port Stephen, but the Emigration Commissioners have advertised without having received an eligible tender, and it will depend upon the result of a second advertisement whether a ship to Port Stephen will be placed at our disposal.

"After that we have the *Belleisle*, which will accommodate 1,000 emigrants of all ages. She will come round the North through the Pentland Firth, and will be commanded by an officer who was employed on the Naval survey of that quarter. She may, therefore, probably take the emigrants from Harris and North Uist (who cannot be got into the line of the Liverpool and Glasgow steamers without much delay and expense) on board in the immediate neighbourhood of their own homes, and may complete her complement of emigrants at Portree from Skye. This will also be a good opportunity for the families who wish to emigrate from St. Kilda. Mr. Chant will no doubt pass them on lists made out by themselves according to our forms, for he cannot spare time to go to that remote island.

"It will be as much as we can manage at present to arrange for filling these three ships—the *Allison*, the ship for Port Stephen if there be one, and the *Belleisle*.

"As regards outfits, Mr. Silver sent, by my desire, clothing for 250 emigrants of all ages to Mr. Crawford of Aros, to supply the emigrants by the *Marmion;* but as emigrants from the Ross of Mull were to get the clothing they required from Glasgow, and the people from Mull and its neighbourhood are better provided with clothing of their own than those further North, there will probably be enough left to supply the emigrants from that district by the *Allison*.

"Mr. Silver also sent to Liverpool clothing for 230 persons by the *Ontario*, in consequence of a requisition to that effect I received from Mr. Fraser and Sir E. Coffin; but only a portion of it was required; and I have desired that it may be immediately completed again to 230, and sent to Portree, consigned to the charge of Mr. Mackenzie, the Secretary of the Emigration Committee there, who will use it in completing the outfits of the emigrants by the *Allison*.

"As soon as I receive Sir E. Coffin's and Mr. Chant's report upon the priced specimens of clothing sent from London and Glasgow to Tobermory for their inspection, I shall take further steps for increasing the stock in Portree depot; but I shall not send more than will be required from time to time to provide for the companies of emigrants by the successive ships, in order to avoid unnecessary accumulations of stock and warehousing charges, and because a warmer description of clothing will be required in October.

"Having made these arrangements, I request that no more clothing may be ordered at Glasgow or elsewhere on account of our Committee, except by a direct order from me. In future, if emigrants get clothing elsewhere than at our depots in the distressed districts they must pay for it themselves.

"The accounts with the heads of the emigrant families will now be closed, and their promissory notes will be taken before they leave the distressed districts; and it is the wish of our Committee that the promissory notes be taken in duplicate, in order to avoid the risk of sending them by one ship only, and that they should be sent to me as soon as the emigrants have left the districts, in order that they may be posted in our ledger, and be forwarded by the first good opportunities to our agents at the ports to which the emigrants are bound.

"We have established at Liverpool a depot of Gaelic Bibles and Testaments; Gaelic Psalm-books and Catechisms, Gaelic Tracts published by the Religious Tract

Society, and instructive and interesting English books for old and young during the voyage and after their arrival in Australia, which will be replenished as occasion requires.

"I shall send copies of this letter to Sir E. Coffin, Commissary General Miller, Mr. Crawford of Aros, Mr. Fraser, Mr. Mackenzie, Mr. Chant, and the Emigration Commissioners.

"Yours sincerely,

"C. TREVELYAN."

In spite of all this care, there were difficulties and misfortunes; for instance, one ship—H.M.S. *Hercules*—was filled up at Campbeltown with 830 emigrants who had been brought thither in smaller vessels. The naval officials spoke no Gaelic; the emigrants knew no English. They saw no necessity for cleanliness. A gross of small-tooth combs was one of the first necessities requisitioned by Captain Benjamin Baynton. The clothing supplied did not always fit; boxes supposed to contain clothing proved to be full of books; soap was much needed. Sir John and his daughter went to Campbeltown, and did all they could for the comfort of the emigrants on board, supplying them also with wool and cotton and needles for the women to knit, sufficient for the making of 500 pairs of stockings.

The following letter is from John Lorn Stewart, chamberlain to the Duke of Argyll:

"*29th October*, 1852.

"I have often thought of your anxiety about your poor emigrants during those dreadful gales. The *Hercules* started on Sunday. Monday was a dreadful day; a great part of the town was under water, and damage done to roads, quays, and bridges. Everyone thought of the poor *Hercules*, but on Tuesday one of my farm-servants came and told me that the large ship was lying off his farm—he said 'anchored' but this could not be; she must have been lying-to, and well she must have done it, as he thought her anchored. Yesterday she was dodging off and on between Pladda and Sanda, the wind during

Sunday morning and Tuesday being one or perhaps two points to the North of West. Last night was clear and bright, and during the night the wind came round S.S.E. This would take the *Hercules* round the Moil and out to the open sea, and I think and hope she is now off the Irish coast with plenty of sea-room. I cannot resist telling you all this, your anxiety for the welfare and comfort of the poor people was so great."

Unfortunately, the *Hercules* was not "round the Moil," but, after five days of intense anxiety and great fatigue to officers and men (for everyone had been on deck since they left Campbeltown night and day), they had been forced to anchor in Rothesay Bay, with sails split, rigging damaged, and the ship quite disorganized. The ports on the lower deck could only be opened once. The emigrants suffered much in consequence; many of the women were very ill, and to one a serious accident happened. A male child had been born during the height of the storm, when the rolling motion was so great as to cause some of the tanks of water to give way on the orlop deck, fortunately without accident. Later, smallpox, fever, and measles broke out on board, and everyone had to be landed and the ship cleansed before sailing again.

We need not dwell longer upon this voluntary work by Sir John McNeill. "He was," says Sir C. Trevelyan, "the largest contributor of all by the valuable assistance he gave to the Society." The work went on throughout 1852-3-4, and, in a lesser degree, in succeeding years. The slackening was partly due to falling off of funds, owing to the lesser need for them. A period of prosperity had set in, and, prices having risen, the need for reduction of population was not so great.

These years are marked by two family losses. John Wilson, better known as "Christopher North," died in 1854. Of him a contemporary writer says:

"Since Burns and Scott were struck down, no event has occurred in literary circles to touch the popular heart

of Scotland so widely and deeply, or to create a similar sensation of pain and loss among all lovers of literature and manly work throughout the kingdom, of whatever rank and class."

During the second Burmese War, in 1852, Brigadier-General Malcolm McNeill, Governor of Vellore and Military Commandant of Arcot, "fell, while leading the attack on Prome, or, rather, died next day from sunstroke contracted during the attack." Referring to this, Sir Charles Trevelyan writes :

"I sincerely sympathize with your domestic affliction. Your brother died as we all hope to do in the active discharge of duty. Indeed, the eminent position attained by the *Colonsay* Brothers and the valuable public services performed by them will belong to the future history of Scotland. God grant that you may be long preserved to us. Your character has become justly appreciated by every member of our Committee, and you must feel yourself that you are finishing an honourable and distinguished career by the performance of very important public services at an interesting and critical period of the social history of your native country."

A tour in Holland to report upon the pauper colonies there in 1854 is the only special Poor Law work of which we have note. The Report is too lengthy and minute to quote here, but the following letter from the distinguished essayist, William Rathbone Greg, gives an idea of its general tenor :

"I have just read your Report on the Pauper Colonies of Holland . . . it is a most valuable and perfectly conclusive contribution to the settlement of a difficult and long-mooted economic problem ; and one that was much wanted after Lang's and J. S. Mills's approval of the establishments in question. It seems, in addition to their failure in all the objects for which they were set up, that they violate a clear maxim of political economy by

sending their artificially assisted produce into the general market to compete with the produce from independent, unaided artisans. I suppose you would despair of making workhouses self-supporting and would relinquish even the attempt to do so. . . ."

In the next chapter we have to follow Sir John McNeill into an entirely new sphere of activity, to which the following letter may form an introduction :

"BALCARRES,
"*20th December.*

"DEAR SIR JOHN MCNEILL,

"Mr. S—— has been for some time hunting for me for a work of yours on the destitution of the Highlands, but fruitlessly so. He writes to me by this day's post that he has sent me the work from you. Pray accept my best thanks for it, highly regarding as I do anything that comes either from your pen or your mouth.

"I have news from the Crimea of the 2nd and an old one of the 15th November, alas the accounts are far from satisfactory, especially of the *disorder of things in various* departments. Nothing in short in its right place.

"I fear the *Times* newspaper is not far wrong in the last report of its correspondent. My letter is from one who has never complained before, now deeply grieving at what is going on.

"Old men, the best of them, will *wear out* as well in mind as in body. The last two months have sadly tried the best constitutions.

"Believe me, very sincerely yours,

"JAMES LINDSAY."

In a footnote of an article published by Sir Henry Rawlinson there occurs the following :

"Sir John McNeill has been for the last four years one of the Poor Law Commissioners for Scotland ; and it was partly owing to his admirable management that the famine of 1847, which decimated Ireland, was so little felt in the sister island."

CHAPTER XXII

WAR IN THE CRIMEA

1853—1855

Towards the end of 1853 the eyes of Europe were turned towards the Near East. A war-cloud had arisen out of "an obscure quarrel between Greek and Latin monks in Palestine about the custody of the Holy Places. Turkey, France, and England sided with the latter, and Russia with the former. War was declared by Russia against Turkey on October 5, 1853. On 30th November the Russians totally destroyed the Turkish fleet anchored at Sinope, on the Black Sea."*

Sir John McNeill's interest in this situation was naturally very keen. In spite of all his Poor Law and emigration work, he had kept up correspondence with friends in the East, and every article upon Turkey, Hungary, etc., which appeared in the *Quarterly* or other publications was eagerly read by him. There are a great many letters from W. Sandford about Hungarian politics among his papers. On 29th December, 1853, he wrote to Sir Charles Trevelyan, the Assistant Secretary at the Treasury :

"You may believe that I have been watching with great interest the progress of events in the East. I cannot help thinking that the crisis which I have long thought that I could foresee, and which I foretold, has at length arrived, when Russia, thinking herself secure on the side of Austria, and believing herself to be strong enough, is determined to make a push for ascendancy in Europe,

* Editor's Preface to Colonel Campbell's "Letters from Sevastopol," 1894.

and especially for a dominant power in Turkey, which, if successful, would, as I believe, imply ascendancy.

" Success in Turkey would rivet the chains of Austria, and would, in like manner, insure the submission of Persia and probably of Afghanistan.

" The battle of European freedom, as I believe, has to be fought again, and upon the result will depend whether we are to retain India.

" You may think this an exaggerated view of the present differences, but after attentive consideration I can regard them in no other light. It is possible that a more determined attitude on the part of England and France, at the first appearance of danger, might have deterred Russia, but I doubt it, and now the Emperor has ' passed the Rubicon ' and cannot recede. He will put forth all his power of mischief, which is great, and if we do not take care will again force the Balkan and dictate peace to Turkey, while we are making Naval demonstrations in the Black Sea. Our Naval operations there will embarrass his military operations, *but will not arrest them*, and be assured that the Turks will get terribly beaten next season if Russia is enabled to bring to bear upon them the whole force which she is now concentrating for that purpose.

" If Persia is earnest in the war with Turkey, her power, which alone has, for the last fifty years, been sufficient to counterbalance the power of Turkey in Asia, will, I doubt not, turn the scale completely in favour of Russia in that part of the world and put the Sultan's dominions in Armenia and Lower Mesopotamia in immediate danger. In short, unless both France and England are prepared to put forth all their strength from the moment they raise a hand to strike, I think it quite possible that Russia may gain her objects, and that we may be unable to force her to relinquish them. The centre of her power is unattackable, and mere hacking at the bark will not shake the tree. We must be content to make the sacrifices that are necessary to dry up the sap that feeds the stem as we cannot get at the stem itself ; we must consent to forego

her commerce and annihilate it; we must defend the Balkan and aid everyone who is able and willing to injure her. I believe we are on the eve of a great struggle, and cannot afford to throw away a single chance. It is true that we are two to one, but that is an additional reason for setting to work *while we are two to one.* I do not at all doubt the power of England and France to force Russia to reasonable terms provided they set about it in earnest and at once. But what I fear is that she may be beforehand with us, and that when she has carried her main point in Turkey we shall begin to feel the effect of the differences which cannot fail to exist or to arise between France and England as to the objects to be aimed at in a new state of things. What I hope is that the two great Powers of the West will beat her back while the unity of their objects is still entire and they both know and acknowledge the precise limits to which they are to confine themselves.

"I have been led on to say a great deal more than I had any thought of when I commenced writing, but I rely upon your discretion, and with you I have no reserve. Pray, however, consider all this as entirely confidential."

On receipt of this letter Sir Charles Trevelyan wrote:

"DEAR MCNEILL,

"Your observations on Russian affairs were *nationally* so important, that I consider I was only doing my duty in placing your note in the hands of Lord Aberdeen, and in giving an extract of the whole of that part of it which related to this subject to Lord Clarendon.* I took it to them myself, and the manner in which they spoke of you showed that they were likely to be impressed by it. Lord Clarendon, in particular, expressed much satisfaction at having such a statement of your opinions. . . . I need hardly add that I entirely concur in your view. . . . Lord Clarendon used a remarkable expression in regard to your paper: he said it was very important

* Foreign Secretary.

that he should have your opinion, 'because they must now come to a decision.' I should have been puzzled to know what this meant if I had not observed in other quarters a disposition to consider it, even yet, as not decided."

In February Sir John had a correspondence with the Duke of Argyll, then Lord Privy Seal. In one of his letters he says :

"There is, of course, much in these negotiations that I cannot know, and there may be good reason for thinking that Prince Menchikoff* would have been contented with concessions much more moderate than he is generally believed to have required even at the last moment ; but having seen and observed the Prince very closely in Persia in 1826, I require something more than the fact that he made at the last moment proposals of great seeming moderation to satisfy me that he made them with any expectation that they would or could be accepted—or until he had committed the Turkish Government to a position that had already made it impossible to comply with them. This was precisely the course pursued in Persia, and very dexterously he did it. . . . The question that presents itself to me is not—What is to be the future of Turkey ? but—What is to be the future of Russia in European politics ?"

There was much discussion in the Cabinet as to whether, should war be declared, the attack should be made in the Crimea with the combined forces of France and England, or elsewhere by the armies at different points. A correspondence took place between the Duke of Newcastle, War Minister, Sir Charles Trevelyan, and Sir John McNeill. Sir Charles, in an able letter to the Duke, of which a copy appears to have been sent to Sir John, advocates the British force being formed into "a separate Expeditionary Force directed to the South-Eastern corner

* Special Envoy from the Emperor Nicholas to the Porte ; afterwards commander of Russian forces in the war.

of the Black Sea. . . . First, because it would save our small force from acting under the command of the commander of the large French force. My knowledge," he adds, " of the impression which these circumstances would make upon the ignorant, credulous, imaginative Asiatic mind induces me to lay great stress on this point." Second, to prevent difficulties caused by jealousy between French and British soldiery. Third, " the Turks stand more in need of assistance in Asia than in Europe." Four, " a small force would produce a much greater effect in Asia than in Europe—partly in consequence of the extensive support they would obtain and organize from the Circassians and other populations hostile to Russia in that quarter." Lastly, " A successful expedition to the Russian Provinces south of the Caucasus, including, as it probably would, the capture of Tiflis and Erivan, and the appearance of the British flag on the Caspian, would secure for us the co-operation of Persia, which has many, and recent, losses to repair in that quarter, and would do more than any other single measure to repair the losses of Afghanistan and re-establish our influence on a firmer basis than ever in the countries between the Caspian and the Indus."

One would have thought that this plan would have had special attractions for Sir John McNeill, but in his lengthy reply (here given by extract only) he says :

" Curiously enough, neither of your suggestions is quite new to me, and I will state shortly the chief grounds on which I arrive at conclusions somewhat different from yours. . . . If Russia is beaten in Europe . . . you can dictate terms to her in Asia. . . . If she is not beaten in Europe, you cannot accomplish your object even if she should be beaten in Asia. . . . If we propose to send our army to carry on separate operations in Asia, there is reason to fear that we should be suspected and accused of thinking only of our own interests in India ; and this would be made a reason why France should

think only of her own interests. . . . I should be reluctant to risk a British force of, say, 20,000 men in the Trans-Caucasian provinces depending for its supplies and means of transport upon the arrangements of the Turkish authorities. . . . I have no confidence in the co-operation of irregulars; they are never in the right place at the right time, even when you can depend upon their zeal and their numbers. . . . We should have to pay enormous prices for everything. . . . An enemy when strong is better served in those countries than an ally. . . . In the one case, the hope of purchasing impunity by subserviency produces alacrity in supplying your wants. In the other, the confidence of impunity produces indifference or even resistance."

This reply was submitted by Sir Charles Trevelyan to the Duke of Newcastle, and no doubt, with his previous letter, helped to guide the Cabinet in their momentous decision of 24th March, 1854, when France and England formally declared war against Russia, the Crimea being eventually decided upon as the point of attack for both forces.

That the influence of Sir John's writings also helped to form public opinion is seen from the following letter from Colonel Fox-Strangeways, a Waterloo veteran who afterwards fought in the Crimea, which is dated 9th November, 1853:

"MY DEAR SIR JOHN,

"I have heard a strong desire expressed in more than one quarter that you may have thought proper to publish a new edition of your work on 'The Progress of Russia in the East,' if with additions, so much the better, the present time being eminently favourable to the impression it would not fail to make, while it could not but exercise an important influence on the public mind in its actual state of excitement. My interest in the subject has been unabated since the days when we were in frequent communication respecting the same countries and

the same policy whose fruits have been ripening until now. The few copies of your work which remained with me have been eagerly sought for, and I need hardly add how much I desire individually to see a republication of opinions and facts which every year since you left diplomacy has so strikingly justified and confirmed."

The pamphlet was republished by John Murray in 1854 in English and French. The map it contained showed the acquisitions of territory made by Russia from Sweden, Poland, Turkey in Europe and in Asia, and from Tartary to have been immense before the Treaty of Turcomanchai in 1828. The maps published herewith show what immense tracts have been added in the eighty years which have passed since the pamphlet was written, forming a further justification of Sir John McNeill's views.

The British army landed in the Crimea on 18th September, 1854. Two days after landing the French and English troops fought for, and brilliantly won, the heights above the River Alma, held by a large Russian army, thus clearing the way to Sevastopol, to which they laid siege from the south. The armies, the Governments, and the British public expected the fortress would fall immediately. No one in authority seems to have anticipated that they would be encamped on those bleak heights, and undertake regular and protracted siege operations, exposed to the fierce rigours of the whole Crimean winter.

The British camp extended from about one and a half to seven miles from the port of Balaklava, through which all its supplies were drawn.

On 14th November a cyclone wrought havoc in the camp, and destroyed some of the supply ships. The road, or rather track, from Balaklava soon became quite impassable for any wheeled vehicle, and almost so for horses and men struggling knee-deep in mud under heavy burdens. Sheltered only in tents, many of which were rotten, lying on damp ground without bedding, insufficiently clothed, without even a change of shirt, fed

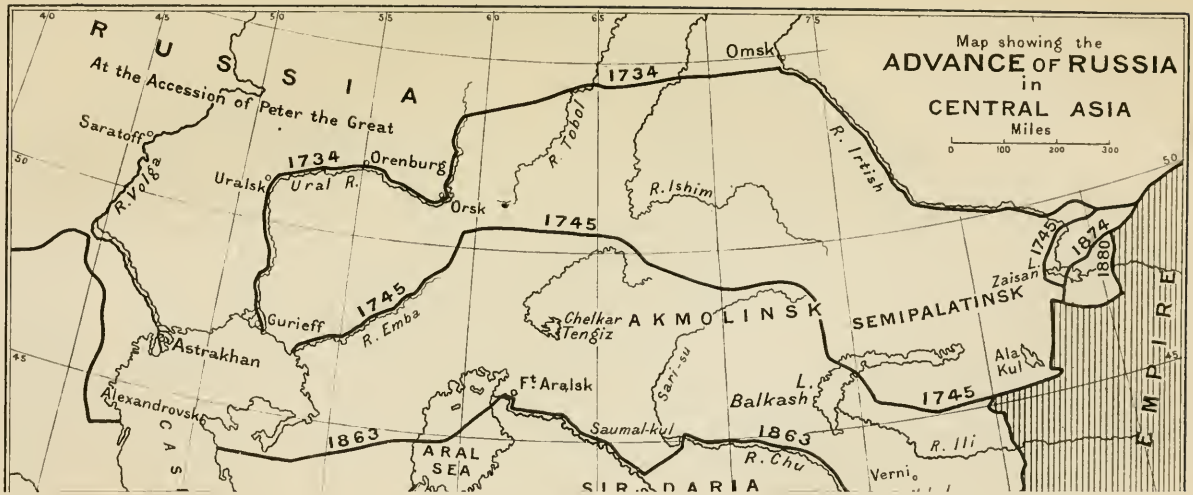
chiefly on salt meat and hard biscuit and green coffee, which, owing to the lack of fuel, they had no means of roasting, without forage for horses or comfort for themselves, this much enduring army held on, dug and manned the trenches, and even advanced the siege in the face of the enemy. Cholera, scurvy, fever rapidly reduced their ranks. In the seven months from October to April inclusive, with a mean strength of 29,648 of all ranks, there were 50,970 admissions to hospital for sickness alone, after deducting those admitted for wounds and injuries, and 9,232 deaths.*

Newspaper war correspondents were, until the Crimean War, unknown, but through the enterprise of Mr. Delane, the editor of the *Times*, Mr.—afterwards Sir W. H.—Russell was sent out to the scene of war. Thus the sufferings of the British army became known to the public, who were inclined to fasten the blame upon General Airey, Quartermaster-General ; General Estcourt, Adjutant-General, who afterwards died in the Crimea ; and Mr. Filder, Commissary-General ; also, to a lesser degree, upon Lord Raglan, the Commander-in-Chief. Mr. Russell's account inflamed public feeling, and the excitement and outcry became so great that, upon a motion being brought forward in the House of Commons by Mr. Roebuck for a Select Committee to inquire into the condition of the army in the Crimea, and the conduct of those departments of the Government which controlled army matters, it was carried by 127 votes. The Cabinet, in consequence, resigned early in February, 1855.

A month before this John McNeill had written to his friend Mr. Paget his dispassionate view :

" Of public matters I shall only say that I am not at all disposed to take a gloomy view of them. All that has been said of Lord Raglan and the conduct of the war in the Crimea was said in nearly the same words of the Duke of Wellington and the war in the Peninsula—

* Colonel Tulloch's " Crimean Commission and Chelsea Board," p. 166.


Map showing the
ADVANCE OF RUSSIA
in
CENTRAL ASIA
Miles
0 100 200 300
RUSSIA
At the Accession of Peter the Great
Saratoff
R. Volga
Uralsk
Ural R.
1734
Orenburg
Orsk
R. Tobol
1734
Omsk
R. Irtish
R. Ishim
1745
Gurieff
1745
R. Emba
Astrakhan
Alexandrovsk
CASPIAN SEA
1863
Ft Aralsk
ARAL SEA
Chelkar Tengiz
AKMOLINSK
Saumal-kul
Sary-su
L. Balkash
1863
R. Chu
SIR-DARIA
1745
SEMIPALATINSK
Zaisan
1745
1874
1880
Ala Kul
R. Ili
Verni
EMPIRE

chiefly on salt meat and hard biscuit and green coffee, which, owing to the lack of fuel, they had no means of roasting, without forage for horses or comfort for themselves, this much enduring army held on, dug and manned the trenches, and even advanced the siege in the face of the enemy. Cholera, scurvy, fever rapidly reduced their ranks. In the seven months from October to April inclusive, with a mean strength of 29,648 of all ranks, there were 50,970 admissions to hospital for sickness alone, after deducting those admitted for wounds and injuries, and 9,232 deaths.*

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* Colonel Tulloch's " Crimean Commission and Chelsea Board," p. 166.

London John Murray

see Napier's History—and has been said of every war, great and small, in which we have been engaged in any part of the world since I can remember such matters. Look at Napier's account of what occurred on Sir John Moore's retreat during and after the retreat from Burgos. Nay, if you go back to the days of Marlborough, you will find the same thing said, in nearly the same terms. It is a part of the national character, and perhaps one of the elements of our success in war. It is our special and much valued privilege to grumble and to counterbalance the power we give our Ministers by grossly abusing them for the use they make of it. But for the free and frequent exercise of this privilege we should begin to fear that our liberty was in danger. The Ministers call themselves the servants of the public, and we take them at their word, and bully them accordingly. This is no doubt all quite right, but it does not lead me to think unfavourably either of Lord Raglan or of the Ministers."

In the new Cabinet—a reconstructed rather than a new one—were several to whom Sir John McNeill was well known. Lord Palmerston became First Lord of the Treasury; the Duke of Argyll continued as Lord Privy Seal; the First Lord of the Admiralty was Sir James Graham; and the Secretary of State for War was Lord Panmure. The last was a nephew of Sir John's friend Lord Dalhousie, and had been himself a student at Edinburgh University, leaving it the same year as John McNeill—1819. Sir Charles Trevelyan was Assistant Secretary to the Treasury.

Lord Panmure, who succeeded the Duke of Newcastle as War Minister, had before him no easy task. The spirit in which he took up his work is shown in his letter to Lord Raglan, Commander-in-Chief in the Crimea, of 12th February, 1855:

"I have most reluctantly come here—not that I expect to do any better than my predecessor, but because I wish to protect, as far as possible, the interests of the army,

and to stand between you and those who are so angry at all that has happened. . . . We are in a curious position. Parliament adjourned till Friday. Mr. Roebuck's motion for a Committee is carried, and almost all the new Government were members of the old. The House of Commons will name that Committee unless some change is made or some step undertaken by the Government which will be painful to you. I think it impossible to submit to carry on the Government unless the House of Commons puts down Mr. Roebuck's Committee. This they will not do unless we move on our part. Some think that a Committee should be appointed to inquire into the whole management of the army. This I wish to avoid for your sake, as you have done great and gallant deeds, and I should be sorry to be compelled to put such a slight upon you. But your Staff must be changed at least—that will satisfy the public—and that radically, and I would strongly advise both Airey and Estcourt to go either to Divisions or come home ; for be assured that, if they do not, they will be swept away by Ellenborough, who will succeed me as War Minister should Lord Derby come in."*

From this quotation it is seen that his attitude was, firstly, a political and party one : he must make some move " to please the public." Secondly, he held a brief, as it were, for the army. Some members of Lord Raglan's staff were advised to vacate their posts because of the popular outcry, but were not to be swept away while the present party were in power. Major-General Richard Airey is repeatedly accused of gross inefficiency and culpable neglect throughout Lord Panmure's letters to the Queen and others, but he remained in his post as Quartermaster-General.

On the same day as the above letter was written a Cabinet meeting was held, at which seven measures were resolved upon, " to establish a better order of things in the Crimea " :

* " The Panmure Papers," vol. i., p. 59.

1. A Land Transport Corps to be formed.
2. A Corps of Scavengers to be procured.
3. A Sanitary Commission to be sent out.
4. A Commission, of which Sir John McNeill is to be the head, is to be sent out to inquire into the working of the Commissariat in all its branches of supply and issue, and every other detail.
5. Civil medical men to be sent out, and a hospital at Smyrna formed.
6. Major-General Simpson is to proceed to the Crimea as Chief of the Staff, etc.
7. A Sea Transport Board is to be formed at the Admiralty.*

It must be remembered that England had enjoyed forty years of peace, and that there was actually no Commissariat Service at all provided for an army on a foreign campaign.

"This service," says Kinglake, "neglected and depressed in former years, had been happily raised up into an excellent state by the able hand and strong will of Sir Charles Trevelyan, the Assistant Secretary to the Treasury, but despite his repeated appeals its field of operations had been persistently kept within the territorial limits which he found established when he came into office, and, accordingly, when this new war with Russia had already become closely imminent, there was indeed a commissariat force for Ireland and for the Colonies, but none for England and Scotland, and none for foreign service—nay, not even the nucleus or rudiment or framework of any such body."†

Sir Charles Trevelyan had hurriedly raised a Commissariat Corps, placing Mr. Filder at the head of it as Commissary-General, and collecting forty officers (a very inadequate number, as events proved) and subordinates, drawn from the retired list, the Colonial Commissariat, the police, etc.

* Abbreviated from p. 53, vol. i., "Panmure Papers," except No. 4, which is given in full.

† "The Invasion of the Crimea," vol. vi., p. 36.

"Upon the Commissariat serving with an English army in the field," says Kinglake, "there devolved the charge of the military chest, with the task of meeting all the needed expenditure, including the pay of the troops, and of entirely supplying the army—supplying it with food for man and beast, with fuel, with light, with the means of land transport—land transport for not only all kinds of stores, but for heavy guns and siege materials, for ammunition, for field equipments, for the needed supplies of provision and forage and clothing, for the removal of the sick and wounded. These were all of them tasks which, normally and as a matter of course, attached upon the Commissariat; but besides, it was their duty to purchase or hire and bring up every manner of thing which the unforeseen necessities of the army or the orders of the chief might require."*

Sir John McNeill was at this time in his sixtieth year, and a man who was not in robust health, twenty-three years in the East and many hardships while there having left their mark upon his constitution. Yet he did not hesitate a moment. Summoned to London by telegraph, not knowing for what purpose, he was requested to undertake the proposed inquiry. At great personal inconvenience, he accepted. Two days afterwards he learned that Colonel Tulloch was to be his colleague, and in three days more they were on their way. "It is of such men as these of whom not only Lord Palmerston, but Great Britain, may be proud," says a contemporary newspaper.

From amongst several private letters praising his "great sacrifice" and "patriotic action" in undertaking these arduous duties at a most insanitary camp, in the midst of cholera, fever, death, and misery, the following is perhaps the most interesting. It is from James Lindsay,† and is dated Balcarres, 9th April:

* "The Invasion of the Crimea," vol. vi., p. 40.

† Lieutenant-General James Lindsay, of Balcarres, M.P., grandson of James, fifth Earl of Balcarres; born 1793, died December, 1855.

SIR JOHN McNEILL, ABOUT 1866.

To face page 322.

"As an old soldier, as a father and having many dear friends in the Crimea, as an Englishman, my thoughts day, and more especially at night, dwell much in your Crimea and thinking of the difficulties you have to encounter there. In my past life I have never seen the Nation so deeply occupied with anything as with the affairs of the Crimea. The past sufferings of the soldiery unnecessarily caused, their noble gallantry, their calm bearing with endurance of suffering without complaint, has touched the heart of England even as it has yours, and given that deep interest which I allude to. People seem much satisfied that you and Simpson are gone there; the opinion is that you are both *safe men* in whom they can confide, and it seems to be the only pleasing feature in the present picture before us."

Associated with Sir John McNeill in the inquiry was Colonel Tulloch, who commanded the pensioners in Great Britain—"a clever, active, lively man, very kind and obliging," as Sir John describes him in writing to his wife. Lord Panmure proposed that the inquiry should occupy six weeks or two months, both Commissioners returning to their former occupations at the end of that time. No payment was offered; they merely drew their ordinary salaries as Chairman of the Board of Supervision and Pensioners' Commandant as usual.

Sir John's first precaution was to ask for "precise definition of the object of the proposed inquiry," which the Cabinet had left somewhat vague. In reply, he received the following:

Extract from Instructions to Commissioners, dated War Department, 19th February, 1855.

"It will be your duty to inquire into the whole arrangement and management of the Commissariat Department.

"You will acquaint yourselves with the mode by which supplies of food, forage, and any other articles are

obtained; and should any better mode suggest itself to you for the execution of this duty, you will transmit to Lord Raglan such suggestion, and also furnish me with a copy.

"You will satisfy yourselves whether there has been a regularity of supply furnished to the army, and a sufficiency to the Store Department at Balaklava; and if not, what has been the cause of the irregularity or insufficiency.

"You will ascertain whether supplies offered for purchase have been accepted or rejected; and if rejected, the reasons for such rejection.

"You will also examine carefully the mode of accounting, and if the system be in your opinion unnecessarily complicated for a period of actual warfare, you will suggest such means of simplification as may occur to you.

"To enable you to conduct this inquiry satisfactorily, you will have authority from Lord Raglan to summon and examine witnesses, and to require the production of all books and papers that you may consider necessary for completing your investigation.

"You will be allowed a Clerk and a Shorthand Writer, to each of whom 9s. a day will be allowed.*

"I have a full reliance upon your executing this duty satisfactorily, and request that copies of all reports and suggestions made to Lord Raglan may be transmitted to me.

"You will be furnished with the rules and regulations in force for the guidance of the Commissariat, and defining the duties of the Department with an army in the field,—of any special instructions issued by the authorities at home to the Commissariat with the army,—and of such Reports relating to the supply of the army as may have been made by the Commissariat to the authorities at home.

"I am, etc.,

(Signed) "PANMURE."

* Twenty-one shillings a day and expenses being the usual rate, no shorthand writer went, and the Commissioners had to make their own notes. This was afterwards brought up by Major-General Airey as a reason for doubting their reliability.

Additional Instructions addressed to Commissioners.

"WAR DEPARTMENT,
"*22nd February*, 1855.

"Referring to my instructions of the 19th instant, I have further to desire that you will make it your business to ascertain what may have been the sources of supply of provisions, forage, and other articles supplied to the troops in the Crimea.

"You will further make inquiry into the alleged delay in unshipping and distributing the clothing and other stores supplied for the use of the troops; and having obtained all the information in your power, you will transmit to me a full report on the subject.

"I am, etc.,
(Signed) "PANMURE."

These instructions, which, we must note, cover not only the supply to the Store Department at Balaklava, but the distributing of clothing and other stores, give powers for inquiry and for making suggestions to the Commander-in-Chief and to the War Minister only; but it is evident from other papers that Lord Panmure, the public, and the Commissioners themselves took a wider view of what was to be expected of them. They were to guide the Government as to what it should do to improve matters. To Lord Raglan Lord Panmure wrote of the Commission: "It will enable us to do much to improve."* They were to report confidentially their opinion of the Commissary-General and of his staff. "I wish you would write me confidentially your opinion," wrote Lord Panmure to Sir John McNeill, "on the various men of the Commissariat now at Headquarters, especially of Mr. Filder. My notion is that this gentleman and many others are too old for the duties they have undertaken to perform, but I find it extremely difficult to get any information upon this, or, indeed, on any subject where personal qualifications are

* "Panmure Papers," vol. i., p. 74.

concerned." They were to make Mr. Filder do his work. "I am afraid Filder," wrote Lord Panmure to Lord Raglan, "is very inefficient. . . . Sir John McNeill and Colonel Tulloch will, I hope, put life into him."* But the most remarkable example of what was expected of them is shown by the following letter:

"(*Secret and confidential.*) "WAR DEPARTMENT,
"*23rd April*, 1855.

"MY DEAR SIR JOHN,

"Lord Panmure has not had a moment to spare to write to you, and he has begged me to write and say that you must shortly expect Lord Raglan to take the field at the head of 25,000 English, 15,000 Piedmontese, 5,000 French, and 10,000 Turks. Lord Panmure is very anxious that, in conjunction with Colonel Tulloch, you should take steps to procure supplies of every kind, and he begs that you will report to him whether you think you are likely to get all the supplies you may want for such a large force in the country. You will of course communicate this letter to Colonel Tulloch.

"Yours very truly,
"GEORGE D. RAMSAY."†

"I know how very high his motives are in undertaking this mission," Lady McNeill wrote to Mr. Paget soon after Sir John started.

There is no doubt that Sir John McNeill set out with high hopes, glad to think that he could possibly help in some way to bring about a mitigation of the terrible sufferings which were believed to prevail, and the accounts of which had stirred the heart of the country as nothing had done before. He seems scarcely to have realized what a difficult—nay, impossible—task lay before them. They were armed with no powers beyond the taking of evidence and of making suggestions, and were in the disagreeable

* "Panmure Papers," vol. i., p. 91.

† George Dalhousie Ramsay (nephew of Lord Panmure) of the War Office.

position of being civil Commissioners examining military men.

After a most uncomfortable journey, owing to the crowded state of the transport ship, they reached Pera on 6th March, and began their inquiries there. Surprise at the excellent state of the hospitals at Scutari is the dominant note of his letters.

"I have never seen the sick of an army in the field so well cared for," he says; "the chief defect in the hospitals now is the absurd and injurious quantities of food and of wine ordered by some of the junior medical men."

From there he also wrote to Lord Panmure privately:

"Yesterday we saw the Deputy Commissary-General and some other members of the department, and I had interviews with several persons who have had dealings with them, as contractors and otherwise. I find that more fresh meat has been sent to the Crimea than I had supposed. . . . It is difficult to reconcile the returns I have obtained of these supplies with the statements that are made by officers coming from the Crimea as to the proportions of fresh rations issued. . . . The mortality has greatly diminished; in four or five hospitals in which are four or five thousand patients, the mortality for the last two days has been 20 and 23. The transports for the sick from Balaklava have brought very few, and the patients recently admitted are said to be in a much less exhausted state than formerly. In short, it seems as if the worst were already past and everything mending."

All books upon the war concur in saying that, though the sufferings had been appalling, the worst was past before the Commissioners reached the Crimea; yet there was difficult, unpleasant work for the Commission to do.

During the few days they were at Scutari the Commissioners made such inquiry into the state of men in hospital there who had come from the Crimea as proved to them that fresh meat and soft bread were the most

essential needs of the army. Sir John McNeill, without losing time, set to work to obtain supplies of fresh meat from the southern side of the Black Sea, a country well known to him. He made use of the British Consuls there, asking them to have tenders sent in to the Commissariat officials, who had hitherto made no use of this rich district so near the seat of war, and capable of supplying fresh meat, forage, fuel, and vegetables, in quantities sufficient for a much larger army than that before Sevastopol. There are among his papers many letters about hay, beef, mutton, pork, fresh vegetables, firewood, charcoal, thousands of turkeys and geese, etc., from Consuls of the Black Sea littoral.

"The most urgent craving of the sick was for a morsel of soft bread . . . the men who were affected with scurvy, many of whom continued to do their duties, were often unable, from the state of their gums, to eat the hard biscuit."*

Colonel Tulloch, who had had experience in Burmah in field bakeries, immediately began preparing ovens, and took other means to obtain an immediate supply of soft bread for the army.

"Enough remained to be done," wrote Sir John McNeill to his wife later, "to make me thankful I agreed to come here. . . . Do not therefore grudge my absence, but be happy in the thought that I may have been some use in my generation."

"BALAKLAVA,
"*12th March*, 1855.

"We arrived here, dearest, this morning, having had a calm passage from the Bosphorus. I cannot attempt to describe this harbour: it is like a narrow, winding Highland loch with overhanging rocks and hills, and so crammed with shipping for three miles that there is barely room for boats to pass between the tiers of ships, three and four deep on each side. We were two hours

* McNeill-Tulloch Report, p. 9.

inside the harbour before anyone could land, for we could not get into a berth, and the horses and mules on board must walk over two other vessels before they can get to dry land. I have not been ashore yet, though it is now night. . . . From information I have picked up on the way I fear our inquiry will be an unpleasant one, but it must be carried out . . . in the meantime all the officers tell me that they get plenty of supplies of all kinds. The captains of ships bring them out on speculation, and to-day I was offered not only hams, cheeses and preserved meats, but bear's grease and perfume, Windsor soap, etc., etc."

Upon first impressions, it must have seemed that the accounts in the *Times* were not reliable. In Colonel Campbell's published "Letters from Sebastopol" he says, on p. 164 :

"Those who have lately arrived, like General Cathcart and Sir John McNeill, are, I believe, convinced that matters have been much exaggerated. I know, however, that they were not, and as far as regards the state of the men in hospital and the transport of the sick, they were rather underrated than otherwise."

Sir John McNeill, however, wrote on 9th April to Lord Panmure :

"In a former letter I stated that we contemplated making a preliminary report, but I now doubt whether we can do so without some unfairness to Mr. Filder. . . . I do not at all intend to prejudge the question, and therefore we shall not be able to make the preliminary report which we contemplated making."

Upon the inquiry part of the Commissioners' Report it would be tedious to dwell at any length ; suffice it to say that they sat, sometimes on board the steam-transport *Gothenburg*, and sometimes in a hut at the camp, for fifty-five days, taking evidence, and patiently recording

and collating it. They examined, either separately or collectively, the Commanding Officer, the surgeon, and the quartermaster of every corps in the Crimea; also officers commanding brigades and divisions; principal medical officers and commissariat officers attached to brigades and divisions; and, finally, the Quartermaster-General, the Senior Assistant Quartermaster-General, the Commissary-General, and the two Deputy Commissaries-General—over 200 officers in all.

That this inquiry into their mode of doing their duty should be resented by the officers is very natural. It cannot have been pleasant either to put the questions or to answer them, but Lord Raglan had given orders that officers were to facilitate the inquiry, so there was no getting out of it. According to Field-Marshal Viscount Wolseley, the Commissioners were "unsuited in every way for such a delicate task," and he tells us that Sir Colin Campbell "expressed his indignation in strong terms when he mentioned the questions put to him—an experienced soldier—by men who knew nothing of war or of its difficulties."* As to the fitness or unfitness of the Commissioners, we hardly think Lord Wolseley was in a position to judge, especially as he says: "Neither of them had ever been heard of before." Other people, whose words carry more weight than those of Lord Wolseley, had heard certainly of the head of the Commission before, as the letters throughout this Memoir show; and as to his fitness, General Simpson, Chief of the Staff, writing to Lord Panmure, says: "The Commissariat I do not pretend to speak of. But Sir John McNeill is busy with it, and a better man could not have been sent out. He is the great exception from the general class of Engineers and Commissioners sent out here, whose great aim seems to be to give trouble *pour se faire valoir*."† Sir Colin Campbell—that distinguished General—it is well known, was of a somewhat peppery disposition, but

* "Story of a Soldier's Life," vol. ii., p. 246.
† "Panmure Papers," vol. i., p. 171.

his resentment against the "damned Doctor" cannot have been very lasting, as there is a letter from "Yours very sincerely, Clyde," dated February, 1861, of a very friendly nature, showing that he had taken great trouble to further the interests of young John C. McNeill because he was "the nephew of Sir John McNeill." John McNeill probably knew more of "war and its difficulties" than most of the officers whom it was his duty to question, in that he had had greater experience as a fighter, as an administrator, as well as medical officer, than those officers of the British Army, whose only experience could have been acquired in forty years of peace.

It will be necessary to look into some of the details of the Commissioners' Parliamentary Reports later, but first we can learn some of the results of the more constructive part of their work from the following letters:

To Lady McNeill.

"21*st March*, 1855.

"I had just returned from breakfasting with Captain Peel in his ship, a fine frigate, the *Leander*, and visiting with him a creek which he thought might suit for landing cattle, when Anton brought me, amongst others, your welcome letter. . . . After failing in more than one attempt I at length succeeded in seeing Lord Raglan, who had been kind enough to call upon us, while we were up at Headquarters to wait upon him. . . . Nothing could be more agreeable than the interview, and for the last five or six days we have been hard at work from noon till five o'clock. . . . So far as we have yet gone it appears that the men have never been without a sufficient supply of biscuit and salt beef and pork of excellent quality, and that they have, also, with the exception of a few days, had rice and sugar as well as a gill of rum. They had some difficulty in managing the green coffee, but most of them did manage to roast and pound it—now they receive it roasted. But they have taken such a disgust at the salt meat that many of the men cannot eat it, and some

regiments are burying, for cleanliness' sake, from 50 to 100 pounds' weight of salt meat in a day, which the men have thrown away. They are now getting fresh meat two or three times a week, and I am pressing for still more frequent supplies which can be procured and *must* be brought. We are also getting up bakeries, the men are now at work building ovens, and we expect, in about a week, to issue soft bread instead of biscuit three times a week to all soldiers and daily to the hospitals, which have hitherto, in the Crimea, had no bread served out to them but biscuit, which many of the sick are so weary of that they cannot eat it. The hospitals have now fresh meat almost every day, but till within a few days even the sick had salt meat served out to them, which many of them would not touch. Thus you see I am already beginning to reap what is to me the most precious reward, in contributing, and feeling that I am contributing, to the welfare of so many thousand gallant and noble-hearted men, and at the same time to the efficiency of the army. But I do not wish to have anything said about this at present. The principle on which I am working is to keep in the background myself, and privately to push on the Commissariat, and let them do everything as if on their own movement.* In this way I get hearty co-operation instead of opposition, and what I want is to *have the thing done* without seeking to have the credit of doing it. If anything were said publicly of what I am about I might encounter much difficulty. All that I write to you of these matters is therefore only for your own eyes and those of a very few discreet friends. . . . Wilbraham dined with us yesterday, and remained the night. It was the first on which he had taken all his clothes off or slept in sheets since landing in the Crimea. On Sunday last he guided us

* Sir John's tact was apparently so perfect in this matter that Mr. Filder, when examined before the Board of General Officers, said : "I have no recollection, indeed, of ever having received specific suggestion from them on the subject" (Chelsea Report, p. 382).

over the field of Inkerman.* Even now, the whole ground where the fiercest struggle took place is strewed with caps, pouches, belts, etc., so closely that my horse could not walk without treading on them. The carcases of horses slain in the fight are still lying in *hundreds* in a deep ravine into which they were thrown because the men had neither time nor strength to bury them in addition to the many thousands of human bodies to be interred. It has been said that there are sermons in stones, but I have heard few sermons that filled me with thoughts so solemn and so little connected with the vanities of life as that Sunday ride over the field, of Inkerman. Wilbraham, who was our guide, is Dep. Adjutant-Genl. of the Second Division, whose position was attacked, and had seen as much of it as anyone, besides he knew the ground well before and has often been over it since. . . . A division of labour more nearly proportionate to their numbers between the English and French has given our men three or four nights in bed instead of being in the trenches every second night, and those who have weathered the storms of winter without serious illness are now looking strong and vigorous and fit for anything. But their numbers are sorely thinned. A battalion of Guards that I had to inquire about to-day landed in the Crimea 800 strong, and this morning could muster only about 180 fit for duty; some other regiments, I fear, have suffered as much, or nearly, in the same proportion—yet there is no flinching—the men who survive are as determined to win as they were the day they landed near Eupatoria with all their comrades around them. A spirit so indomitable was never seen in the world before, as far as I know."

To Lady McNeill.

"*26th March.*

"I have nothing new to tell you of; we have been very busy hearing and noting down the same answers to

* Battle on 5th November, at which the Russians attacked, but were repulsed with heavy loss.

the same questions over and over again, but I have been used to this. We improve, however, day by day. Everyone begins to feel the influence of what has been done and is doing, and I adhere to my plan of quietly suggesting and sometimes only hinting what would or might be desirable, and the desire to appear to have done it themselves is sufficient to ensure a considerable amount of activity in the right direction. . . . The Russians are working like bees in a hive. I can see them or their fresh work at every point. Still, those who must know better than I can do, appear to be confident of ultimate success, and in truth there is nothing the British soldiers may not do. . . . Battalions have been reduced to one-fourth of the number who landed in the Crimea, yet not one officer whom I have examined could say that he had ever heard a murmur from the men. All that the Nation can do for such an army is too little, and I shall live and die a happier man if I can carry with me, as I hope I shall, the conviction that I have contributed even in the smallest degree to increase their welfare. . . . They are quite unspoilt by all the praise and all the kindness they have received from people at home, they trudge to the trenches with their biscuit and salt meat night after night, and for one British soldier to be seen drunk either in the British or French lines you will see ten in our allies. I have always believed them to be unequalled in prowess; I now believe them to be unequalled in high morals. But in one quality they are helplessly deficient—the division of labour in our busy country teaches a man to rely upon others for everything except the particular article, whatever it is, which he himself produces. The consequence is that our men can do nothing for themselves; they cannot build a hut, or make or mend their own clothes or shoes, or cook, or wash, or make shift with imperfect means in any way. In times of difficulty such as they have had to endure they are, consequently, nearly as helpless as children, and unless, when they happen to have officers

of energy and ingenuity to set them an example and show them how to help themselves, they succumb under privations which more versatility of skill would have enabled them to overcome. There is therefore a remarkable difference in the way in which regiments have encountered the difficulties of the past season. The Sappers and Miners, for example, having all been instructed in handicrafts, and to a certain extent educated, and having been called upon in various ways to exercise their ingenuity and shift for themselves, have suffered comparatively little, though they have been fully as much exposed both to fire and weather as any other corps. The Naval Brigade, too, has been very healthy, and has weathered in tents all the storms of the winter without suffering any such privations as the soldiers have been exposed to. We must, I think, begin to teach our soldiers something more than mere military drill."

To Lord Panmure.

"BALAKLAVA,
"*2nd April*, 1855.

"Things go on improving here. We can have no cattle in good condition till June, but a considerable supply of fresh meat is now coming in, and the resources of the rich country behind Samsoon, extending from Erzeroum on the East to Tosid on the West, are now beginning to be made available. I do not know how it happened that they had been neglected until now. I believe that the country referred to could supply this army with all the food of every description that it requires. Mr. Filder has also been induced to make arrangements for enclosing in a rough way a tract of the coast near Samsoon that produces good hay and is easily enclosed, because it has a forest on one side and the sea on the other. It will, I hope, produce hay enough for the army for next winter, if it should be required, and the hay will be available about the middle or latter end of June, according to the weather.

"Vegetables are coming in from the same unexplored quarter in considerable quantities, in addition to the supplies previously received from other places.

"Since the 30th of March soft bread has been issued to some of the sick in hospital, and as the private bakers have increased and are still increasing the quantity, by the erection of new ovens, and working night and day by relays, the Purveyor has been enabled and directed to supply soft bread as a medical comfort to all the sick on requisition. Colonel Tulloch's ovens make slow progress in consequence of numerous impediments, but in the meantime I am informed that soft bread is to be brought from Constantinople sufficient to admit of issuing it several times a week. . . . The craving of the men for soft bread is intense, and the evidence we have heard leaves no doubt upon my mind that a change from biscuit is, in every point of view, expedient if it is not absolutely necessary.

"Forage for the horses and mules is now for some time to come secured here. Means have been found of compressing chopped straw, which comes advantageously in aid of hay, and the only objection to which has been its bulk. The Commissariat deserve credit for the measures they have taken to make it available.

"Steam vessels have been set apart for some time to convey ordinary supplies from the Bosphorus and elsewhere. The *Hope* and *Faith*, which appear to have plied pretty constantly, and six other vessels suited for the conveyance of cattle, are engaged in bringing bullocks and sheep. These arrangements, which are not new, except that a sixth cattle steamer has lately been added, appear to be good and sufficient, especially now that a greater proportion of the supplies will be drawn from ports only seventeen or eighteen hours distant from hence by steam. I continue to pursue steadily the course which in a former letter I stated my intention to adopt. A great deal had been done to improve the supplies of the army before we arrived; there was an obvious desire to

do everything that could be done to make it as perfect as possible, and to get credit for having done so. . . . By leaving with the people I found here the credit of putting things right so far as they required amendment I have been able at once to insure the adoption of the measures which appeared to me to be most urgent. . . . I do not doubt that you will approve of my having taken this course, though it was not perhaps contemplated when we left home. I think I may venture to assure you that in this way I have been able to do more good than I could have done in any other, and if you consider it a deviation from my instructions I hope you will nevertheless think that I have done right.

" . . . I was not at all aware of the extent to which scurvy had prevailed in this army till I had examined the Medical Officers; in some Regiments scarcely a man escaped the taint, and many of the officers were affected."

It is necessary to glance briefly at the political situation at the time.

By the seven measures resolved upon by the Cabinet on 12th February, of which the McNeill-Tulloch Commission was one, the Government had hoped to put an end to the Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry proposed by Mr. Roebuck. But " the House of Commons and the country are resolved on inquiry," wrote Lord Panmure to Lord Raglan on 23rd February; " no Government can resist it, and it has been ascertained that Lord Derby would yield to it were he to come in. It is useless therefore to resist the storm."*

This Committee, known officially as the Select Committee of the House of Commons, sat through March, April, and May, examining officers who had returned from the Crimea and members of the late and of the present Cabinet, such as Lord Aberdeen, the Duke of Newcastle, Sir James Graham, Sir Charles Trevelyan, Sidney Herbert. They examined also Mr. Macdonald, the administrator

* " Panmure Papers," vol. i., p. 73.

of the *Times* Fund for the Relief of the Sick and Wounded in the East, and others. Lord Wolseley has expressed great belief in this investigation. The Select Committee, according to him, "put the saddle on the right horse, and condemned the Cabinet of 1854 as the real authors of all the misery."* General James Lindsay, however, held a different opinion. In a letter to Sir John, dated 29th May, 1855, he says :

"The Houses of Parliament seem to be striving to render themselves contemptible in the eyes of the country. . . . The Committee of Inquiry, I believe, has done little or nothing . . . nor were the inquiries made with any decided object to obtain truth, for the witnesses were never prepared for their examination, but examined often by rambling, disconnected questions made by men who knew not what to ask."

This Select Committee issued three Blue-Books of evidence. A perusal of these three volumes reveals the biassed nature of the inquiry : leading questions are put, facts are not verified, the political motive underlies the whole. John McNeill, writing to his friend Mr. John Paget on 3rd April, said :

"My ostensible object here is inquiry, and so far as I can yet see the result will show much less *delinquency* than is generally supposed, or than I anticipated. I have not yet discovered a regiment that has not had its rations regularly day by day. There was a time when the hospitals were but imperfectly supplied with medicines and medical comforts, but that time is long past, and now they are as well provided as any hospitals in London. The difficulties that had to be encountered are almost inconceivable. The small extent of wharfage in this, our only harbour, made it often impossible to land the stores most urgently required at the proper time. Liverpool restricted to one dock will give you some

* Preface by Lord Wolseley to Colonel Campbell's "Letters from Sevastopol."

notion of the inevitable delay and confusion. Then imagine that everything landed had to be loaded on pack-horses and mules, standing up to their knees in mud, and you may fancy what a scene that only dock in Liverpool would have become. . . . It may have been a misfortune to be condemned to such a harbour, but once occupied it could not be relinquished without great danger of sacrificing the army. Still, there had been errors, omissions, mismanagements, though not, I believe, to anything like the extent that the evidence before Mr. Roebuck's Committee might lead you to believe. It is the tendency of all such popular movements to exaggerate evils, but this is especially true in England. That Committee is, in fact, but an emanation from the popular mind, and partakes of its blind fury for sacrifice. Do not suppose that I am the apologist for the people here—I shall have my own score against them—but I am the advocate of truth and fair play."

The Government did not feel at all strong in their position ; they were always afraid of the effect of the Committee's proceedings and of the action of Lord Ellenborough in Opposition, which is shown by two letters from Lord Palmerston to Lord Panmure :

"1*st May*, 1855.

" I have found you a first-rate man for the head of the Commissaries in the Crimea instead of Filder—Mr. Watkins, now manager of the Manchester and Sheffield Railway. . . . McNeill having an important office in Scotland ought not to be kept too long in the Crimea, and we cannot consign the troops to the tender mercies of Filder. If, in addition to this arrangement, you would appoint Markham to be Quartermaster-General instead of Airey . . . we should be able to make a good defence in Parliament against the attacks which are coming upon us for want of energy and resolution in regard to our military arrangements ; but I, for one, cannot undertake to stand up in my place in Parliament and defend an inac-

tivity which would leave our army to be, in the ensuing campaign, the victim of that knot of incapables who, in the last eight months, have been the direct cause of the disability and death of thousands of our brave men."*

Again, on 8th May :

" I see, by the wording of Ellenborough's motion, that his attack will probably turn upon your having continued a number of incapable men in important situations connected with the military situation at home and abroad. . . . It will be in vain to say that McNeill has made good arrangement for the Commissariat; the answer will be, What business has a Scotch Poor-Law Commissioner to be buying bullocks and hay in Asia Minor for the use of an army in the Crimea ? Let him come home and do his own business, and let a proper man be sent out to the Crimea to take charge of the business to be done there. . . . I have often urged these things upon you without effect; we shall now see what our opponents will make of them."†

On 14th May Lord Ellenborough attacked the Government, moving a resolution " that the conduct of the war has occasioned general dissatisfaction," etc. This motion, which had no doubt caused the Government considerable anxiety, was defeated by a large majority. The triumph thus gained by the Ministers, which they owed partly to the support of all the army men who were in the House of Lords, had a far-reaching effect upon the reception of the McNeill-Tulloch Reports when they were issued.

The fact was that a reaction was taking place in the feeling of the public.

" I am happy to say," says General James Lindsay, " that John Bull begins to think he has been judging rather harshly of his own people, and that a reaction is taking place, as it usually does in England where opinions on public matters are always exaggerated."

* " Panmure Papers," vol. i., p. 180. † *Ibid.*, pp. 191, 192.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

1855, 1856

THERE was one person at Scutari and in the Crimea whom we cannot pass unnoticed—Miss Florence Nightingale. Between her and Sir John McNeill then began what proved to be a lasting friendship. Most unfortunately, a number of letters of hers which he had preserved are not now available, but a copy of one of his letters to her is among his papers, and it shows that she had peculiar confidence in him. A private matter, a trouble—fortunately imaginary—had distressed her. She had been very ill with fever, and he visited her. When he was leaving the Crimea he wrote, on 27th May, 1855 :

" MY DEAR MISS NIGHTINGALE,

" I found you so much better to-day that I think the time may be at hand when you will hardly require of me an explanation of the matters respecting which you wrote to me, and have spoken more than once." After most delicately and tactfully dispelling the cloud which had distressed her, he continues : " I hope that although the circumstances which led you to apply to me had no reality, the confidence which you extended to me was real, and I can sincerely assure you that it will always give me great satisfaction to find an opportunity of proving to you that it has not been misplaced. . . . If I can be of any use to you in any way, pray tell me how, and at all events,

" Believe me to be, my dear Miss Nightingale,

" Very respectfully and sincerely yours,

" JOHN MCNEILL."

Upon 7th June Sir John wrote to Lord Panmure from Constantinople :

" We arrived here this morning, having been driven from Balaklava by attacks of internal disorder. Colonel Tulloch's being the first he has had, and mine the second. We had, however, about finished our Inquiry, and the Confidential Report of its principal results is nearly complete. It will be forwarded from hence before Monday, 11th, when we hope to set out by the Austrian steamboat for Trieste, which professes to arrive there in seven days. From there I propose to go to Vienna, where Lady McNeill and my daughter have promised to meet me."

This Preliminary Report, which was dated 9th June, stated :

" The evidence is so voluminous that it will occupy some time to prepare a detailed Report founded upon the information which we have collected and to suggest what may appear to us to be the best mode of rectifying the defects which became apparent, or which have been pointed out to us, in the course of our investigations. We have therefore thought it advisable at once to report confidentially to your Lordship some of the results at which we have already arrived, and some of the opinions to which we have been led, by the facts which appear to us to have been established."

In its last paragraph it said :

" The evidence in regard to some of the subjects of our Inquiry has not yet been corrected by the officers last examined, having been sent to them for that purpose only the day before our departure from Balaklava. When we have received the evidence, and the answers to the queries transmitted at the same time, we shall have the honour of reporting upon the matters to which they relate."

It so happened that Major-General Airey was not examined verbally before the Commissioners left, and his

evidence was therefore, with that of a few others, received later, and was given only in the form of written answers to written questions.

The "Preliminary and Confidential Report" which had been sent to Lord Panmure and Lord Raglan was afterwards incorporated in what was officially called "The First Report," dated 10th June, 1855. This was not laid before Parliament till the "Second Report" was ready, in January, 1856. The "First Report" was nearly the same in substance, but not identical with the preliminary one; it contains a good deal more, and is a very carefully compiled and instructive document of some twenty-one pages. Every fact stated in it was verified, a reference in the margin in each case being made to the evidence of the officers, which was printed at the end, and to returns which were given in an appendix separately. The evidence was given in the words of the officers themselves, was revised and corrected by them at their leisure, in their own quarters, and attested by their signatures.

A few extracts from the Report, arranged consecutively, will best show the result of the inquiry.

"It has been only by slow degrees and after frequent repetition of similar details, as one witness after another revealed the facts, . . . that we have been able to form any adequate conception of the distress and misery undergone by the troops. . . . The sickness and consequent mortality in the British Army in the Crimea have, however, been very great. . . . This excessive mortality is not to be attributed to anything peculiarly unfavourable in the climate, but to overwork, exposure to wet and cold, improper food, insufficient clothing during part of the winter, and insufficient shelter from inclement weather. . . . It was not so much from default in the rations of salt meat and biscuit that the diet of the troops affected their health as from insufficiency of other descriptions of food. . . . The prevailing diseases were, at that time,

affections of the bowels in most cases connected with scorbutic tendency in the system; . . . those diseases were aggravated . . . by the continued use of salt meat. In many cases the aversion to that description of food amounted to absolute loathing, . . . although it is admitted that both beef and pork were quite sound and of good quality. . . . That evil was aggravated by insufficiency of vegetable food. The issue of 2 oz. of rice daily to each man, which had been ordered by Lord Raglan, . . . unfortunately ceased, the order not having been renewed. It appears . . . that it has not been the practice in the British Army to keep the General Commanding informed of the amount of provisions in depot, or available for the use of the troops. Had Lord Raglan's attention been called to the stores of rice and other farinaceous and vegetable food at his command, or had there been any officer on his staff who could be held responsible for the proper application of the available supplies, there can be no reasonable doubt that the men would have received in lieu of 2 oz. of salt meat, which many of them could not eat, an equal weight of food which would have been more acceptable and infinitely more beneficial. A more unaccountable and still more unfortunate failure to apply to the use of the army stores of which it stood in urgent need occurred in regard to lime-juice. On the 10th December 278 cases, containing nearly 20,000 lbs., arrived by the *Esk* . . . yet none of it was issued till the 1st of February, an interval during which the sufferings of the army from scurvy were probably at their height. . . . We are not aware of any sufficient reason why soft bread might not have been baked at any time for the use of the sick and also for the whole army. . . . But there appears to have been an indisposition to make the attempt. . . . When the difficulty about fuel to roast coffee began to be seriously felt in December there were 2,705 lbs. of tea (equal to 173,000 rations) lying in the Commissariat Store in Balaklava. . . .

"The Commissariat maintained that it was not the prac-

tice of the Service to issue fuel to the troops in the field, and that a soldier is not entitled to a ration of fuel unless in barracks. . . . This want of alacrity on the part of the Commissariat . . . could not have arisen from any difficulty in procuring firewood. The southern coast of the Black Sea is wooded down to the shore for hundreds of miles, . . . but the resources of the coast had not then been explored. . . . In countries subject to Turkey, which are easily accessible, there is not, and there never has been, any difficulty in procuring a sufficient number of cattle to supply the army with fresh meat. . . . It seems to be a defect in the British Army that no one is especially responsible for the fitness of the diet supplied to the troops. . . . Supplies of the utmost value to health may thus be lying within reach, without being made available because they are not specified on the scale of rations. . . .

" The most disastrous of the deficiencies to which we have referred was the deficiency of land transport. . . . From the commencement of the campaign the scale upon which the Commissary proposed to provide land transport for the army appears to have been dangerously small, yet the scale upon which it was actually provided fell far short of even what he proposed. . . . In answer to the question why, in those circumstances, he did not increase the transport in the Crimea, he states that he had as many animals as he could feed. . . . But if proper arrangements had been made to provide the army with forage for the winter, wherever it might be at that season, the forage would have been available for use in the Crimea. . . . The deficiency of the land transport in the army cannot be accounted for on the ground that he could not obtain sufficient sea transport to convey the animals ; . . . the real cause of the deficiency of transport appears therefore to have been the want of forage. There is very considerable difficulty in arriving at accurate conclusions [regarding issues of forage to cavalry] because, previous to 1st January, no account of such deficiencies [in issues of

forage] was kept by the Quartermasters of Cavalry. . . . It may suffice to state that they must have been very considerable indeed. . . . There is one case, however, in which such serious consequences have arisen that it requires some special notice—the Light Cavalry Brigade . . . stationed near the Windmill, a distance of at least seven or eight miles from Balaklava. . . . It is alleged by Deputy Assist. Com. Gen. Crookshanks that there was a certain quantity of hay at Balaklava, but not the means of carrying it to the front; occasionally he managed to bring up a little, till the 14th November, when the supply failed entirely. After that date the want of transport affected the supply of barley also, which on several days did not exceed from 1½ to 2 lbs. per horse, being all they had to keep them alive. . . . When the supply began to fail, the Commissariat officer . . . proposed . . . that if a detachment of the horses was allowed to go down daily, he would engage to bring up enough for the rest of the Brigade. This proposition appears to have been brought specially under the notice of Lord Cardigan, . . . but his lordship declined to accede to it."

Sir John McNeill's private letters have already shown how fully alive he was to the exceptional difficulties which were encountered, so it is unnecessary to repeat the frequent references to these difficulties in the extracts from the Report. In the conclusion the Commissioners say:

"It appears to have been assumed till the beginning of November that any present inconvenience could be but of short duration, and that any expedients by which the emergencies of the moment could be overcome were sufficient for the occasion. A man of comprehensive views might probably have risen superior to these disadvantages, and created an organization suited to the circumstances. . . . But it is unreasonable to expect that every man who may rise to the head of so limited a department, even after a long course of meritorious service, is to display, whenever the occasion demands it,

inventive resources and administrative capacity of a very high order."

The Commissioners thus said all that could be said for Mr. Filder, the Commissary-General, whom the public had been clamouring to have recalled for many months. Mr. Filder was " recalled," as Lord Panmure says, or gave up his appointment in the Crimea on the ground of ill-health, as he says himself, during August, 1855, some months before the Report was made public.

In the course of the inquiry Sir John McNeill discovered incidentally that the supply of quinine which should have been in Balaklava was practically non-existent. As the warmer weather approached, cases of malarial fever became frequent, and but for his " timely discovery," and for " the steps he had taken to call attention to it," as Lord Raglan said in his letter of thanks, the troops would have been without this valuable drug.

Sir John McNeill's satisfaction over having had it in his power to add to the immediate well-being of the army, was succeeded by a hope that the most carefully-thought-out recommendations for the future conduct of the Commissariat Department, which were introduced in the Commissioners' Reports, would be acted upon and be fruitful of still greater good in the future. These hopes might have been better fulfilled had a suggestion made by Queen Victoria been acted upon. Upon his return from the Crimea he was commanded to " dine and sleep at Osborne " on 24th July, the " command " being accompanied by the considerate injunction that " if Sir John had any apprehension of scarlatina, with which some of the Royal Children have been attacked, he should not scruple to decline." In writing to Lord Panmure on 27th July, Her Majesty says :

" We were much interested and gratified and comforted by all Sir John McNeill told us—whose enthusiasm for, and admiration of, her dear, brave army is delightful to hear ! Could not something like the Chancellerie Civile

in foreign armies be usefully adopted in ours in the Crimea, and if so, would not a person like Sir John McNeill be very eligible for the head of it ? Neither the Chief of the Staff nor the Military Secretary can supply this want ; Lord Raglan united it all in his own person."*

This suggestion was, however, not adopted.

As we have seen, the First Report adverted to Lord Cardigan and Commissary-General Filder. The Second Report adverted to Lieutenant-General the Earl of Lucan, Major-General Sir Richard Airey (Quartermaster-General), and Colonel the Hon. Alexander Gordon (Deputy Quartermaster-General), son of Lord Aberdeen. Before giving any of the information which the Second Report contained, we must speak of the publication of both Reports, and the extraordinary commotion which that publication caused.

It is evident from their letters that the Commissioners fully understood that both Reports were to be laid before Parliament. The revised edition of the First it was thought better to keep back till both could be made public together. Lord Panmure had had the "Preliminary Confidential Report" for over six months, yet there is not a word or line from him on the subject ; nor do the few short letters received by Sir John McNeill from him show any interest in or anxiety for the welfare of the troops. One is led to the opinion that he took very little interest in the matter beyond the question of how it would affect himself and his party politically, and this opinion is confirmed by his remark to General Simpson : "You must turn your attention to doing something for me. My credit depends on the wintering of the army."† It seems probable that he had not even read the First Report till both were finished, but to have been satisfied with the information given him in Sir John McNeill's private letters.

Parliament was impatient for the production of the

* "Panmure Papers," vol. i., p. 314. † *Ibid.*, p. 388.

Reports, and pressed Lord Panmure. In writing to the Queen, he says :

" It appeared to Lord Panmure and his colleagues inexpedient to withhold these Reports from Parliament, more especially as much had been built upon the Commission, and the result of its labours had been promised."*

Lord Palmerston, Lord Panmure, and Sir John McNeill had some conversation on the subject early in December. Lord Palmerston's consent was unwilling and unexpected (by Sir John, at least), and he said that some parts that were confidential ought to be withheld. Lord Panmure was at that time laid up with a severe attack of gout. He had many important matters to attend to ; he therefore apparently did not read the Reports till after 20th January, 1856, and then to have found their conclusions unpleasantly well authenticated. To the Queen he wrote :

" Lord Panmure read the Report with a view to strike out inconvenient passages, but he found he could not do so successfully unless he struck out or altered the evidence also, a step Lord Panmure could not take, and of which Your Majesty would justly have expressed your condemnation."†

To Sir John he " commended the Reports as being temperate and well written, and said that although they contained things which might give rise to discussion in Parliament they did not contain anything which as a Minister of the Crown he was not prepared to discuss in Parliament."‡

It was unfortunate for the Government that the Report of their own Commissioners confirmed the contentions of the Opposition as expressed in Lord Ellenborough's defeated motion of 14th May, 1855. The troops certainly " had been exposed to hardships which could have been avoided by forethought," and the Report seemed to confirm the " deliberate opinion that it is only through

* " Panmure Papers," vol. ii., p. 108. † *Ibid.*

‡ Confidential Memorandum, Sir John McNeill, June, 1856.

the selection of men for public employment without regard to anything but the public service that the country can hope to prosecute the war successfully."

Of five officers mentioned in the Reports as being responsible for some of the want of forethought, only one, Commissary-General Filder, had been recalled ; the others had not only not been recalled, but had actually been the recipients of special honours and promotion.

As the accuracy and impartiality of the Reports were afterwards called in question, it is necessary to give some quotations from letters which passed between the two Commissioners during the months from August, 1855, to January, 1856, the period during which they were engaged in completing them, this duty being added to that of their ordinary occupations. The letters show the principles which guided them.

That the preparation of the Report took so long is explained partly by the difficulty of getting their replies from the Quartermaster-General and his staff, and also by the exceeding care which was taken to verify every fact, to follow out the evidence of every witness, to consult authorities before making recommendations, to give every man a chance of explanation where there appeared to be conflicting evidence. Colonel Tulloch had charge of the part dealing with the Quartermaster-General's Department and of the statistical part of it, and Sir John of the Commissariat, of the framing and proof-correcting.

Sir John McNeill to Colonel Tulloch.

"*8th August.*

"We have to deal only with facts established by evidence, and all we can desire is to deal with them intelligently and fairly with a view to the future advancement of the public service, and to deal even-handed justice as far as we are able without fear or favour—this we may do without discourtesy and without pressing unfavourable inferences."

Colonel Tulloch to Sir John McNeill.

"*18th August.*

"Herewith about two hundred pages of the Report, which I regret to find is assuming such a formidable shape. . . . I have given Gordon a proof of his evidence and that of Airey for correction. I will try to send you the sheet containing the latter on Monday."

Sir John McNeill to Colonel Tulloch.

"*6th September.*

"I cannot conceal from myself that I must take full responsibility for every part of our Report, and that I must therefore conscientiously examine the whole of the evidence on which it is founded. This applies not only to the part which relates to the Quartermaster-General's department, but to the whole from beginning to end. I must therefore wait till the whole evidence is before me, and when it is I shall go over the whole with a view to our laying before Parliament such a Report as may exhibit the impartiality of spirit in which our inquiry was conducted, and the use that may be made of the information which has been elicited."

Sir John McNeill to Colonel Tulloch.

"*26th November.*

"I am very desirous to give our Report the character of being prepared rather with a view to remedy defects than to condemn individuals, and acting upon this principle I shall probably modify in 'proof' some of my remarks on the Commissariat."

Sir John McNeill to Colonel Tulloch.

"*29th November.*

"I have gone over the evidence, and shall go over it again. It may have been ours till it was revised and signed by the witnesses, but it then clearly became as much theirs as if they had written it from the first."

Colonel Tulloch to Sir John McNeill.

"*6th December.*

"I have traced 70 marquees to Varna; . . . if they arrived safe they are there yet. . . . The more I inquire the greater appears to be the confusion; for instance, the Ordnance returns state that 27 hospital marquees were given out to the Ambulance Corps, but Major Grant writes me that they were not marquees, but ordinary men's tents."

Colonel Tulloch to Sir John McNeill.

"*11th December.*

"I send you MSS. of that part of the Report which relates to the duty performed, and have selected all the separate statements which bear reference to that subject, that they may be printed in the Appendix. . . . If you think I have written too strongly you can modify it a little, but I think you will now agree with me as to the origin of the whole evil—viz., defective staff arrangements. Whoever heard in any army of a regiment going into the trenches for six nights in succession? Who was superintending all these arrangements? A heavy burden ought to rest on their souls."

Sir John McNeill to Colonel Tulloch.

"*15th December.*

"It is not necessary that we should determine how much of the sickness arose from one kind of overwork or from another. All that we attempt to show is that, according to the evidence, the military duty was more than the men could bear without injury to their health, and that in consequence of the want of transport other duties were superadded, which increased the evil. The evidence on this point is quite clear. . . . On the question of the road we have the testimony of Officers commanding Divisions that it would have been impossible to employ a sufficient number of men to make it and at the same time carry on military operations. This is quite enough

for us. . . . I have no recollection of the application to the Adjutant-General for the return obtained from him. The whole of that information may be very valuable, and it may be desirable to lay it before Parliament and the public, but if I had contemplated doing so I should have considered myself in fairness bound to afford those who were responsible, and whom it was probable the public would blame for it, an opportunity of explaining the circumstances which, in their opinion, justified the course that had been pursued. No such opportunity, so far as I know, has been afforded, and to have pretended to have examined those officers upon that subject would, in my opinion, have been a step beyond the limits of our authority or commission. . . . My belief is, that the repeated refusal of the French to consent to a division of the labour more nearly proportioned to the relative strength of the two armies was the principal cause of our being forced to the alternative of either overworking the men or abandoning the enterprise. Is it desirable to raise that question or to publish what must raise it? If not, on what grounds could we justify ourselves for bringing charges in our official Report against men who are precluded by a sense of honour and of public duty from defending themselves? It is impossible even to think of such a thing. It would have been quite as just and reasonable to have given the evidence and the returns of defects in the Quartermaster-General's and the Commissary-General's departments without giving either of those departments an opportunity of explanation."

Sir John McNeill to Colonel Tulloch.

"*26th December.*

"The matter of rations is so important that I have sent my remarks on the scale and composition of the diet to Dr. Christison, one of the highest authorities in the kingdom upon such questions, for his observations, especially in regard to the nutritive value of various articles. . . ."

Not only in these extracts, but throughout the whole correspondence there is an absence of the animus, the incorrectness of fact and figures, the superficiality, and the distortion of evidence for political or personal ends, of which the Commissioners were afterwards accused. Never was a more impartial, moderate, and honest Report laid before Parliament.

Unfortunately, the high-minded tone which characterized the Reports did not characterize the Press articles commenting upon them. The *Times* took the lead with violent attacks upon the officers mentioned, and upon the Government which had rewarded them. The officers all wrote to Lord Panmure indignant at the "animadversions" they said the Reports contained upon their conduct, and Lords Lucan and Cardigan rose in their places in the House of Lords to attack the Reports and the Cabinet who were responsible for publishing them. Mr. Layard announced a motion in the House of Commons about the appointments and employments conferred upon the officers, and Lord Palmerston wrote to the Queen to the effect that there was reason to believe that, owing to the deep and general impression made upon the public mind by the Report, the motion would be carried. Also that Sir James Graham had suggested privately to Sir Charles Wood that the best way to meet it would be to appoint a military Commission. "The Queen and Prince Albert, who were disposed to regard the army as depending on the Crown,"* were indignant, and answered Lord Palmerston as follows:

"BUCKINGHAM PALACE,
"*16th February*, 1856.

"The subject to which Lord Palmerston refers in his letter of last night, and upon which the Cabinet is going to deliberate to-day, has also caused the Queen much anxiety. A civil Commission is sent out by the Government to inquire into the conduct of the officers in command in the Crimea; this is done without any consultation

* "Panmure Papers," vol. ii., p. 111, footnote.

with the Commander-in-Chief. They report to the Government, inculpating several General Officers and others in high command: this Report is not communicated to the military authorities, nor to the persons affected by it, but is laid upon the table of both Houses of Parliament. These Officers then, for the first time, find themselves accused under the authority of Government, and that accusation communicated to the Legislature without ever having been heard in answer or allowed an opportunity to defend themselves. It is stated in both Houses by the Government that the Officers may send papers in reply if they choose! But who is to be the judge on the trial? The Press, of course, and the *Times* at the head, have already judged and condemned, and the House of Commons is now moving *in default of another judge* to constitute its tribunal by a Committee of Inquiry.

"It is quite evident that if matters are left so, and military officers of the Queen's Army are to be judged as to the manner in which they have discharged their military duties before an enemy by a Committee of the House of Commons, the Command of the Army is at once transferred from the Crown to that Assembly.

"This result is quite inevitable if the Government appear as accusers, as they do by the Report of their Commission, and then submit the accusation for Parliament to deal with, without taking any steps of their own!

"The course suggested by Sir James Graham, and alluded to by Lord Palmerston, of following the precedent of the inquiry into the Convention of Cintra, appears therefore to the Queen to be the only prudent one.

"The Queen thinks it most unfair to the officers to publish their statements beforehand, as these will not go before judges feeling the weight of their responsibility, but before the newspapers, who are their sworn enemies and determined to effect their ruin, for which they possess unlimited means.

"The Queen wishes Lord Palmerston to read this letter to the Cabinet."*

It is evident from the Queen's letter that she had not studied the Reports herself, and that she had been misled as to their contents. The inquiry was into the supply and distribution of food, clothing, etc.; the conduct of the officers responsible for supply and distribution was unavoidably disclosed. The Commander-in-Chief in the Crimea *had* been informed that such an inquiry was in progress, and though there is no record that Lord Hardinge, the Commander-in-Chief at home, had been informed, it is most probable that he knew of it, as the Queen herself certainly knew, Lord Panmure having sent her at least one of Sir John McNeill's letters. The "Preliminary Confidential Report" was communicated to Lord Raglan, and all the evidence adverting to the five officers *had* been submitted to those officers by the Commissioners, in order that they might explain away the facts if they could.

That the army was a prerogative of the Crown was very strongly upheld by the Queen and Prince Albert, and they looked upon upholding the prestige of the army as an important duty. In September, 1855, in writing to Lord Clarendon, a letter which was to be shown to Lord Panmure, and which discusses a visit by the Duke of Newcastle to the Crimea, and the Duke's comparison between the Sardinian army there and the British army, the Prince says:

"They [the Sardinians] have the inestimable advantage over the French that they are commanded (like ours) by gentlemen, but have the great advantage over us that these gentlemen put the soldier yet above the gentleman, whilst with us, where from our constitutional history and national habits the soldier is disliked, the officer almost seeks to excuse himself from being an officer by assuming as unsoldierlike a garment or manner

* "Letters of Queen Victoria," vol. iii., p. 174.

as he possibly can ; . . . all our civilian interference, now increasingly the fashion, necessarily must lead to increase this evil, which may finally cause the ruin of our army. The officers will try to appear less and less as soldiers, for this is at once to proclaim their stupidity, inefficiency, and incapability of understanding military questions, etc., etc., etc., to the world—that is the fashion of the Press, and the present politicians take [it] for granted, and th only remedy suggested by the Press or Parliament foi any defect in our military organization is to take the matter out of the hands of military men, who can know nothing about them, put it in those of some M.P. or civil clerk. . . . All this is very serious, but will not be remedied by the abuse of military men in difficult and responsible situations."*

General Airey, though much blamed by Lords Panmure and Palmerston before General Simpson was sent out as Chief of Staff, was well reported on by that officer, and by General Codrington, who succeeded him. On General Airey's return from the Crimea in August, owing to ill-health, he was consulted on various matters connected with the war by the Cabinet. He assured them that supplies were amply secured for the army in future. He had long talks with the Prince Consort, and was recommended by H.R.H. for the post of Quartermaster-General at the Horse Guards in September, 1855, an appointment to which Lord Panmure agreed. He was also selected as one of the five officers representing Great Britain at the Council of War in Paris during January, 1856.

To Sir William Codrington Lord Panmure wrote :

" *15th February.*

" We are about to be involved in a serious difficulty by the ferment made by the Report of Sir John McNeill and Colonel Tulloch. The four officers blamed especially in it for the disasters of 1854-55 are indignant at the evidence

* " Panmure Papers," vol. i., pp. 392, 393.

given in the Crimea. The House of Commons are indignant against the officers. High personages are fearful lest the opportunity be seized to get the administration of the army placed, as the Admiralty, under the control of Parliament. All is unhinged, and Layard has given notice of a motion for the 28th, which will be full of difficulty. All mean to put in written defences against the Report, and I shall lay them before Parliament. It is a pretty mess, but I have fought through worse, and hope to get over this without any serious charge or injury to the Queen's authority."

From Lord Panmure to Sir William Codrington.

"*29th February.*

"The Report of McNeill and Tulloch is giving us no end of trouble, and every attempt is being made to ruin Airey and Gordon; but I will uphold them as far as I can, for, though many things might have been better, I conscientiously believe they did their utmost to perform the arduous duties with which they were charged."

It can easily be understood from all this that the situation in which the Cabinet found themselves was one of great difficulty. The choice was forced upon them of upholding their own Commissioners by assuming an attitude hostile to the army and displeasing to the Crown, or of denouncing the Report of their own Commission, facing hostile motions in the House of Commons, while satisfying "those in high places" and the army.

The Cabinet met on 16th February. The demand of the officers to have an inquiry was acceded to, and, in accordance with the Queen's suggestion, the Board was appointed. Lord Palmerston, writing to Lord Panmure, says:

"*21st February.*

"I suppose you may as well call it a Board of General Officers to inquire into Matters adverted to in the Report of the Commissioners, and to receive Explanations from

those Officers whose Conduct has been called in Question by that Report."

If the name thus suggested by Lord Palmerston had been adopted, the inquiry would have had less the air of finding fault with the Commission than the one which was afterwards given to it—viz., "A Board of General Officers appointed to Inquire into the Statements contained in the Reports of Sir John McNeill and Colonel Tulloch, and the Evidence taken by them relative thereto animadverting upon the Conduct of certain Officers of the General Staff and Others in the Army."

It was thus the Commissioners who were to be put on their defence, not the officers.

Lord Panmure submitted the names of seven Generals to the Queen, one of them being Lieutenant-General Sir De Lacy Evans, K.C.B., who had been one of the Generals in command of a division in the army of the Crimea. Her Majesty objected to his name on the ground that "the Queen thinks that no one from the Crimea ought to form part of the Commission."* No doubt Her Majesty did this from the best of motives, but her decision had the effect of detracting from the efficacy of the Board. Not one of them had been an eyewitness of the state of the Crimean army, or knew the circumstances except by hearsay. They were all very old gentlemen, most of whom had seen considerable service in their youth, General Sir Alexander Woodford, the President, having been made an Ensign on 6th December, 1794.

* "Panmure Papers," vol. ii., p. 110.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE CHELSEA BOARD OF GENERAL OFFICERS

1856, 1857

THE peculiar position in which the action of the Government, in appointing the Board of General Officers, placed the Commissioners was calculated to try their mettle in no small degree. How John McNeill, whose actions had hitherto always met with official approval, dealt with a new situation this and the following chapter will show.

When the Crimean Report first appeared, "the whole nation concurred in applauding." Even those newspapers which had been opposed to the inquiry joined in the approval of the result, and dwelt, moreover, on the "temper and moderation which marked the investigation." "The English Army is under deep obligation to you, and I am certain," said Sir Justin Sheil, "this production will render it great service." It was not even condemned in military circles; many thought it would lead to good for the army.

On 9th February Sir John McNeill, quite unconscious of any dislike of their Report on the part of the Government, wrote to Lord Panmure, saying that now their labours were over the time had come when he wished to "represent the zealous and efficient co-operation for which he was indebted to Colonel Tulloch," and requesting that he might be given "the promotion which I believe he was permitted to hope for at the conclusion of the service on which he was engaged with me." A curt note from a secretary, saying that Lord Panmure "cannot comply with your request, as His Lordship has already

enough on his hands about the Commission without promoting Colonel Tulloch," was the unexpected reply.

Very soon letters of complaint from Lucan, Cardigan, Airey, and Gordon reached the Commissioners through Lord Panmure, the two first being laid on the table in the House of Lords at the request of the writers. These the Commissioners courteously answered, but Lord Panmure was unwilling to give the same publicity to those answers. " I had no idea of the uproar we should create," wrote Colonel Tulloch ; " everyone of all parties calls out for punishment."

The violence of the newspapers is exemplified by the following extract from a *Times* leader of 12th February, 1856 :

" The publication of the Crimean Report has at least had the effect of convincing the accused Crimean officers that some explanation of their conduct during the period of their command is expected of them ; . . . the representations made by Ministers in the two Houses of Parliament in palliation of the conduct of their chief military agents are now proved to have been totally untrue. The fatuous gossip of ' good society ' and of the fierce old gentlemen in clubs has been duly weighed in the balance, and may now be estimated at its proper worth. The fact simply is, that between them the chief English officers in the Crimea destroyed one-third of the army committed to their care. . . . These gentlemen are now strutting about our streets with all the halo of heroism around their heads. . . . The Report of Sir John McNeill and Colonel Tulloch has fallen like a Russian shell in the midst of these dreamers. . . . This Report—this Official Report, set on foot by the Government—must receive the amplest consideration, and every officer whose conduct has been therein impugned must be brought to the most exact account."

With this style one can compare the tone of Sir John McNeill's letter to Colonel Tulloch :

"GRANTON HOUSE,
"EDINBURGH,
"*22nd February*, 1856.

"MY DEAR COLONEL,

"It does not, I confess, appear to me to be unreasonable that men who have been attacked as these men have by the Press, founding upon the Report, should be heard in their own defence. The amount of public reprobation that has been heaped upon them is excessive, and if, as you say, there is a cry amongst all parties for their punishment, I do not see how a hearing could well be denied them before inflicting it. Their duties were not confined to the branch which we investigated, and although they may have failed in that branch, they may have been very efficient in others. But whether any such tribunal as you tell me is proposed will command the confidence of the public, is another question.

"There has been all along, as you know, a considerable difference in the manner of regarding these matters between you and me. Both in the Crimea and since our return I have been urging that our business was with the defects, not with the men; but you have been haunted by the apprehension that the Report, and especially that part of it of which you took charge, would be accused of not bringing home blame to individuals. What has occurred appears to me to be the natural result, and I must abide the consequences of what I tried to prevent....

"The Government are in such a position that they cannot help justifying, if possible, the appointments they have made, and Lord Hardinge, of course, is entitled to expect it. They could hardly say, 'We had not seen the Report then, but now that we have seen it we shall turn them out,' especially after Layard's notice of motion. Besides, it may be doubted whether, if the war went on, Airey with his experience would not be as good a man as they could have. My opinion is that he would. Of Lord Cardigan I know nothing. Of Gordon you know I have in many respects a very favourable opinion. I could not therefore consider their being retained in their

offices as any imputation against the truth or accuracy of the Report. It is founded upon evidence, and if its statements are borne out by the evidence it can be questioned only by questioning the veracity of the witnesses, or by alleging that there are grounds of exculpation which we either did not know or have omitted to state. The latter will probably be the course taken, for we gave full opportunity to state all that could be said in exculpation, and it cannot be supposed that any Commission would impugn the evidence of the accused parties themselves and their official returns. I fully anticipate, therefore, that we shall be told, 'Your statements are true, but they are not the whole truth; you have not made sufficient allowance for many circumstances, and your judgment is therefore too severe, and conveys too unfavourable an impression of the conduct of those officers.' I may be very wide of the mark, but such is my conjecture.

"Yours sincerely,
"JOHN MCNEILL."

There is little doubt that had Sir John McNeill done the whole inquiry himself, there would not have been such opportunity given for virulent attacks in the newspapers or in the House of Commons.

Up to this time not one line of official approval of their work had been sent to the Commissioners nor had one word of public approval been spoken, yet Sir John McNeill, in his high-minded way, in spite of newspaper notices regarding the appointment of the Board of General Officers, and the curt refusal of Lord Panmure to reward his colleague, believed it impossible that the Government would not see that justice was done to the men who had faithfully fulfilled their Commission. Still no communication was made to the Commissioners; they were left to gather what was being done from the newspapers, along with the rest of the public.

When Lord Panmure announced the appointment of

the Board of General Officers in the House of Lords on 21st February, he was much blamed for the embarrassing position which the Government had created. After a long speech upon the subject, Earl Grey says :

" In justice to those officers, if there be anything in this Report reflecting upon them, upon which they ought to be heard, the opportunity of explanation should have been given before the Report was produced, and before an *ex parte* statement, as it must be taken to be, was laid before Parliament. I say also it is a reflection upon the Commissioners after their Report is made public to make it the subject of a further inquiry. The appointment of a new court of inquiry implies that Her Majesty's Government, who selected those Commissioners, are not satisfied with the manner in which they performed their duties."

Lord Panmure's reply was very lukewarm :

" Those Commissioners have given a very full and intelligent Report, and in some cases they have expressed their opinions freely as to the causes of the great distress to which the British army was reduced in the winter and spring of 1854-55. . . . I shall carefully abstain from giving any opinion as to those allegations."

In the House of Commons, Mr. Peel, Under-Secretary of State for War, was even colder than his chief. It became evident to everyone that the Government were not going to uphold the Commissioners and their Report.

Colonel Tulloch was bursting with indignation at all that had happened, and even Sir John was inclined to think that they must defend themselves, so they prepared a Memorandum, dated 29th February, with the intention of having it published, and of submitting it first to Lord Panmure with these remarks :

" Even after the intention to appoint a Military Commission had been announced in Parliament, it appeared from a conversation with Colonel Tulloch that neither Your Lordship nor Mr. Peel were aware, though it is

minutely explained in the Report, that the evidence had been corrected and signed by the witnesses. You both seemed to imagine that it rested upon our authority. It cannot therefore surprise Your Lordship to learn that we think it necessary to guard against a similar misapprehension on the part of the public."

As this Memorandum does not seem to have been published, it appears probable that Sir John McNeill thought better of it after reading a debate in the House of Commons of the same date.

Of this debate the *Times* says :

" Notices of motion bearing more or less directly upon the important discussion which is to take place this night, are numerous enough to indicate the deep interest which is felt upon the subject by all parties in the House of Commons. Whatever may be the conclusion at which the General Officers may arrive, there is no doubt as to the conclusion which would most satisfy Her Majesty's Government and the military authorities at the Horse Guards. In the excess of their zeal Lords Hardinge and Panmure have almost offered their own personal guarantee for the officers. . . . The subject matter of the accusation is the destruction of a large portion of the army in the Crimea—the real point at issue is the future organization of the British Army."

In the debate Mr. Roebuck spoke first, praising the Commissioners very highly, and objecting to the Chelsea Board as substituting an " inefficient for an efficient inquiry." Sir John Pakington followed, more or less in support. Mr. Peel (Under-Secretary of State for War) replied, amusingly reminding Mr. Roebuck that, when he opposed the sending out of the Crimean Commissioners in 1855, he had described Sir John McNeill as " an old man, unable from physical debility to go so far as the Crimea, much less to move about and investigate into all the various matters !" In the rest of his speech he was decidedly hostile to the Report, talking of its conclusions

as doubtful in the extreme. Mr. Layard* followed, thanking the Commissioners, and pointing out how unlikely it was that subordinate officers examined before the Generals would dare to speak their minds if it would involve them in a contradiction of their superiors.

Then followed a man who had a right to speak—General Sir De Lacy Evans—the same who had been objected to by the Queen as member of the Chelsea Board, and who had commanded a division during the war. After defending the Report regarding some details which had been adversely mentioned by Mr. Peel, he continued, with great earnestness :

" I must say that the comment of the hon. gentleman the Under-Secretary of State for War, as the representative of Government, as well as the conduct of the noble Lord the War Minister, towards these Commissioners is the most ungrateful and unjust I ever heard of. . . . The noble Lord at the head of the War Department, in reply to a question put to him by Lord Derby, said : ' See what a vast superiority there is in the material state of the army in the present year as compared with last year !' . . . While he mentioned the change that had been effected, he carefully omitted saying how it was brought about. (Hear, hear.) I shall not follow that example, and I now most distinctly say that it has been mainly brought about by those Commissioners whom the hon. gentleman has this night been instructed to deprecate and disgrace. (Loud cries of Hear, hear.) . . . Who was it also that caused fresh provisions to be sent for along the various coasts of the Black Sea and the Bosphorus ? Why, the Commissioners ! (Hear, hear.) There were fifteen hundred miles of coast along the Black Sea, and upwards of a thousand along the Bosphorus, covered with cattle and provisions : there never was an

* Austin Henry Layard, discoverer of the site of Nineveh, Eastern traveller and scholar, afterwards Sir Henry Layard, H.B.M. Ambassador at the Courts of Madrid and Constantinople, died 1894.

army in the world that had such vast means of transport at its command : we had unlimited command of the sea and an enormous amount of vessels at our disposal, and although these things were known, it was the Commissioners who have been disparaged to-night, who first convinced the Government of the facts. I speak therefore of the Commissioners with gratitude because of the material benefits which they conferred upon the troops. (Cheers.) . . . The hon. gentleman has not been content to pass the Commissioners by this evening without notice, as was done a few nights since by the noble Lord, but he has ventured to impugn the veracity even of those gentlemen. (Hear, hear.) . . . I rejoice that the Government have committed the gross blunder, injustice, and inconsistency that they have upon this occasion by publishing those Reports, because, independently of the proceedings of the Commissioners having saved the lives of some thousands during the last six or eight months, and having immensely contributed to the efficiency of the troops, the Reports of the Commissioners and the evidence with which they are accompanied will remain on record, as a menace to Governments who may be willing to place favourites instead of competent men in high stations, and will point to the staff, commissariat, and military of other armies, and perhaps of other ages, what ought to be done to protect the lives and health of an army in the field. (The gallant General was warmly applauded on resuming his seat.)"

Mr. Gladstone spoke next. After lamenting the personalities of the debate, he said :

" I felt convinced that . . . the Government would feel the sacred obligation incumbent upon them to respect and uphold, wherever they were right, the Commissioners who, at their instance, had undertaken a laborious and important duty—(Hear, hear)—one of the most painful, invidious, and thankless—(hear, hear)—and, let me add, one the performance of which has been attended

with immeasurable benefit to the army. . . . When the names were announced in this House by my noble friend the Head of the Government, it was felt by every man that it would have been impossible to choose two individuals better qualified by their character, their talents, their experience, their activity, and intelligence to form part of such a Commission." After finding fault with the title of the Royal Warrant appointing the Board of General Officers, he continued: "I did not hear so much as one word throughout the whole course of that speech (Mr. Peel's) even in acknowledgment of the labours of the Commissioners. (Cheers.) I did not hear one word of any benefit that had resulted from those labours. I did not hear one word of the intention of the Government to uphold them. What I did hear was that there were discrepancies between the Report and the evidence. . . . No impartial man can read it, setting aside the inferences that arise from it, without seeing that the Commissioners have done no more than obey the orders they received. But it may be said that, out of this collection of facts, arise inferences prejudicial to the character of certain officers. I trust my noble friend [Lord Palmerston] will tell us in what position Sir John McNeill and Colonel Tulloch now stand before the Government in regard to that Report."

Thus pressed, Lord Palmerston, in defending the Government, was forced to eulogize the Commissioners.

"It has been asserted," he said, "that the proceeding which the Government has adopted is a reflection on the Commissioners who went out to the Crimea. I deny that conclusion. . . . Sir John McNeill and Colonel Tulloch performed their duties to the entire satisfaction of the Government, and with an infinite advantage to the Service—(cheers)—and the result has been that, whereas at the time they went out there existed general confusion and irregularity in all the local arrangements connected with the supplies of the army, from the moment they put

those matters to rights, the army has been exceedingly well supplied, and regularity and abundance have succeeded to irregularity and deficiency. (Hear, hear.) Therefore, I beg it to be clearly understood that the Government feel much obliged to these gentlemen for the able and satisfactory manner in which they have performed the duty they undertook—(cheers)—and there is nothing in the course we have taken in appointing a Board of General Officers which implies the slightest reflection on the conduct and proceedings of those two Commissioners. . . . We are doing no such thing. We are appointing a Board of General Officers to receive the explanations from officers who think themselves aggrieved by that which is contained in the Report of these Commissioners. So far from anything we have done being intended to imply the slightest disparagement to those gentlemen, we attach—and I beg to state it in the most unqualified manner — the highest importance to their labours. They were chosen because we knew them to be men of high character, of great ability, and of great discernment, and we attach great value to what they have done. The public service has derived the greatest benefit from their Inquiry, from their Reports, and from their suggestions, as well as from the local improvements which they effected in that part of the Service to which their attention was directed."

Mr. Roebuck withdrew his motion.

Colonel Tulloch's somewhat excitable and eager temperament, and the fact that the headquarters of his work, as Commandant of Pensioners, was in the War Office buildings, led him to say and write and propose things to the authorities which were often embarrassing to his colleague. On 10th March Sir John wrote to him :

" The statement which Lord Palmerston made in the House of Commons on Friday last expressed in strong terms the entire satisfaction of the Government with the manner in which we had performed the duty undertaken

by us as Commissioners, and freely acknowledged the advantage which the public service had derived from our proceedings. I cannot therefore permit myself to doubt that Her Majesty's Ministers consider it incumbent upon them as a matter affecting their own honour to take all proper precautions for the protection of the character and credit of men who undertook an unusual, a difficult, perilous, and most invidious duty at the special request of the Secretary of State for War, with the concurrence of his colleagues, and who are now declared by the Prime Minister to have performed that duty to the entire satisfaction of the Government and the advantage of the nation.

" I do not feel at liberty now to question the intention of Lord Palmerston's Government to fulfil the honourable obligation which His Lordship's declaration in Parliament clearly imposes upon them ; and I decline to interfere with the execution of the trust which devolved upon His Majesty's Ministers when that declaration was made. I am the more strongly impelled to take that course by a desire to avoid any agitation, either in Parliament or in the country, which is calculated to cause embarrassment, at a moment when questions of the highest importance are under discussion in Paris.

" I request that you will have the goodness to transmit to Lord Panmure a copy of this letter, together with any observations which you may desire to make on your own part."

That the confidence in the support of the Government in the above letter was more a pious hope than an actual belief is shown by the following letter, written two days later, to that member of the Cabinet whom he knew best in private life—the Duke of Argyll :

Sir J. McNeill to the Duke of Argyll.

" *April* 12, 1856.

" For many reasons I have been unwilling to give you any trouble or annoyance about the Crimean Commission and the Report which has caused such a commotion ;

but perhaps you will do me the kindness to read the enclosed copy of a letter which I have written to Colonel Tulloch, requesting him to send a copy of it to Lord Panmure. It has been a subject of much regret and vexation to me that the Government should have so managed the course they have taken in this matter as to lead everyone to attribute to them the intention of abandoning the Commissioners and discrediting their proceedings. I have now been in this country many months since my return from the Crimea, and during that time have never on any occasion heard one word that I could construe into approbation of the proceedings or acknowledgment of the services in which I have been engaged. It was not until I read the report of Lord Palmerston's speech on the 29th Feby. that I had any reason to believe that the Government were satisfied with the manner in which the Commission had performed the duty it had undertaken, and when the whole country rang with the clamour that you were discrediting your Commissioners I had no information that could lead me to a different conclusion.

"Why such reserve? I asked for no reward, I founded no claim for a reward upon anything that I had done, and this Lord Panmure knew perfectly well, for I even told him that I was perfectly satisfied with the salary of my office here which went on in my absence, telling His Lordship at the same time that I was amply rewarded by the belief that I had done some good.

"I now learn from Lord Palmerston's reply to Mr. Gladstone's appeal that the Government were entirely satisfied with the proceedings of the Commission, and acknowledged its services. For what purpose was that information withheld from me? Why was it not given to the public when the Government considered it necessary to take a course which inevitably led to an opposite inference? Why did the organ of the War Department in the House of Commons, even as late as Feby. 29th, assume a tone which, in the estimation I believe of every-

one who heard him, was intended to discredit the Commissioners? Why did he carefully avoid alluding to the services which Lord Palmerston, that same evening, so freely acknowledged? These are questions which I cannot help putting to myself, and which I am unable to answer in any manner that can give me satisfaction or security. I attribute no intentions to anyone, and I served long enough under Lord Palmerston in difficult times to feel satisfied that he is not a man to abandon a public servant who has faithfully performed his duty merely because that duty happens to be invidious, and there are other men in the Government in whose hands I am safe. All that I am anxious for is that the Government should look after the matter and see that I am not unintentionally damaged."

A few days later Sir John received the following letter from Lord Panmure:

("*Private.*) "War Office,
"*11th March*, 1856.

"MY DEAR SIR JOHN,

"I meant to write to you a day or two since on reading the letter which you addressed to Colonel Tulloch, a copy of which he sent me.

"This letter is quite in accordance with my views of your high character, and you are perfectly justified in trusting that H.M.'s Government neither intend to have your Report pull[ed] to pieces by the Board of General Officers, nor to withhold their full support from these Commissioners, whose conduct they have every reason to approve.*

"I have been much disappointed by Colonel Tulloch's want of judgment, since the Report has given rise to public controversy, and the manner in which he has thrown himself into the arena and held communication with and furnished information to those who have been too ready to use it as a means of party annoyance to the Government.

* This promise was repeated in a letter to Colonel Tulloch, dated 7th April, 1856.

"He has cooled down since receiving your letter, but it would have been more dignified and more in accordance with his position as a servant of the Government had he pursued the same cool course which you have done and relied more on the real justice of the case. I am sorry to hear that you are not well, but I hope that when this weather changes you will soon be yourself again.

"Yours very faithfully,

"PANMURE."

On receipt of this letter, Sir John replied that, although he was "not acquainted with the details of Colonel Tulloch's proceedings, he thought he was more sinned against than sinning."

Several friends urged Sir John McNeill to take some steps to vindicate his position. "I think if you wish to have fair play, and not be shelved or overthrown, you should come up to Town," wrote Mr. W. R. Greg.* But Sir John, refusing to lend himself to anything that might cause embarrassment to the Government, remained resolutely by his own fireside.

The Royal Warrant appointing the Board of General Officers was dated 25th February; they had a preliminary meeting 3rd April. At first it was intended to have held these meetings with closed doors, but the indignation in the House of Commons was so great that the Government were obliged to yield, though it was much against the Queen's wish. Eventually the first twenty-three meetings were open; during these witnesses were examined. The last twenty-three meetings were closed, and the Report was issued on 4th July, 1856.

The record of the public proceedings of this Board exhibit a very great contrast in spirit to that which animated the Commissioners, whose proceedings we have followed. From the first, base motives were attributed, personal recriminations were allowed, unfair advantages taken, and unworthy inferences drawn. In their final

* Author of "Enigmas of Life" and other essays.

Report, the General Officers made deductions not borne out by the evidence, and, very obviously, were intent only upon clearing the officers of all blame at the expense of the Commissioners or of the Treasury.

At the preliminary meeting it was decided that "Notice be given of these proceedings to Sir John McNeill and Colonel Tulloch." This was the first intimation which they had received, and Sir John replied, asking in what pages of the Report the "animadversions" complained of were to be found. To this letter he never received any answer. Before this he had made up his mind not to appear at Chelsea, and in the following letters urged Colonel Tulloch to adopt a like course :

"GRANTON HOUSE,
"EDINBURGH,
"17*th March*, 1856.

("*Private.*)

"MY DEAR COLONEL,

"I have received your letter of the 15th, with Mr. Filder's defence. I have not examined his remarks minutely, but from a cursory perusal they appear to be temperate, and to contain nothing that calls for an answer from us. So far as I can yet see I am clear for taking no notice of the document. . . .

"My opinion still is, and now more than ever, that our true course is to be quiet, and not by restlessness to lead people to suppose that we have not entire reliance upon the real truth and justice of our case. So far as regards the Quartermaster-General's Department, the whole thing is in a nutshell. Were the articles there? Were the troops in want of them? Were they issued to the troops? The returns give the answers, and it is impossible to escape from the inference.

"You must not allow yourself to be lured away in any circumstance, by any temptation or any ingenuity, from this simple ground; there you appear to me to be impregnable, but if you allow yourself to be tempted, by argument or by the prospect of a greater triumph, into the discussion of collateral details, you will soon be

involved in an inextricable maze. There is no reason why the battle should be fought on details ; the returns are the key of your position, and you must hold to them and not allow any diversion to draw you away from them for one moment. If the returns are not to be relied on, that is not your affair.

" I write this, supposing it possible that you may be summoned as a witness. In any other case be in no hurry to ' rush into print.' Let the thing go on. I am much mistaken if it does not soon become an embarrassment to everyone concerned provided they are left alone. It would be a godsend to them to have an antagonist before the Board, and you could not do them a greater favour than to place yourself in that position. Without an antagonist they will be firing in the air. The Press may perhaps try to provoke us to come forward, for their own amusement and profit, but it will not do to be made sport for the Philistines. There is the Report, the evidence, and the other documents, that is all we have to say.

" Yours sincerely,
" JOHN MCNEILL."

Sir J. McNeill to Colonel Tulloch.

" *8th April*, 1856.

" I foresee great embarrassment from the step you have taken, if the Board of General Officers should accede to your proposal to be allowed to call and cross-examine witnesses and request the production of documents. . . . Even the demand implies that you accept the position of being upon your defence before the Board, or, on the other hand, forces you into the position of a prosecutor. Whichever way you take, no good, as I believe, can come of it, but much evil may. The best thing that can happen to you is a refusal. As you were well aware that such a course was entirely opposed to my views, I suppose I must regard your having adopted it, without previous communication with me, as an indication that you do

not intend to act any longer in concert with me, but to take a separate course. I have therefore written separately to Colonel Mundy for the information as to animadversions which I agree with you in thinking we ought to have."

Unfortunately, Colonel Tulloch did not take this sage advice, but appeared before the Board, called and cross-examined witnesses, and soon landed himself in the "inextricable maze" predicted. He gave, as a reason for adopting a separate course, that as an army officer his position was not an independent one, as was that of his colleague. He did not perceive till too late that his action risked Sir John's reputation as well as his own.

The second or main Report of the Commissioners, which was the one which caused the greatest resentment, is dated "London, January, 1856," and deals with supplies of clothing, blankets, tents, marquees, huts, shelters for horses, knapsacks—all those things, in fact, which were known as Quartermaster-General's stores, as distinct from Commissary-General's. Though these stores were throughout the army known as Quartermaster-General's stores, they were supplied by the Commissariat Department; but the articles could not be distributed to regiments without requisitions signed in approval by the Quartermaster-General. The Commissioners, therefore, held the Quartermaster-General's department responsible for such blankets and clothing as were lying idle among those stores when sorely needed by the troops.

"During the month of December," says the Report, "the severity of the winter had much increased, and the medical officers described the sufferings of the troops, for want of proper bedding, warm covering and clothing, as very serious. No circumstance was more dilated upon by those gentlemen than the condition of the men lying on

the muddy floors of their tents with nothing under or over them except a blanket or great-coat, often quite wet. From this condition even the sick were not, at that time, exempt. It will be observed that amongst the supplies received as early as 21st November there were nearly 8,000 rugs, and that the number in store and on board of ships in the harbour on the 7th December exceeded 10,000—irrespective of 3,750 lost in the *Prince*. These rugs were nearly as well calculated as blankets to give protection from cold, and were, perhaps, better suited to resist wet; yet, when the supply of blankets fell short, it does not appear to have occurred to anyone that the rugs were available as a substitute."*

General Airey afterwards held that his department was not responsible, but when the Commissioners, on 24th May, went to headquarters for the purpose of commencing investigations there respecting the distribution of these supplies, they were referred by Sir Richard Airey to Colonel Gordon and Colonel Wetherall (his own subordinates) for any information they required, because he had been obliged to leave this matter in their hands, in consequence of severe illness at the time distribution was going on.† He thus acknowledged the responsibility which he afterwards denied—a denial which was upheld by the Board of General Officers, who stated in their Report that "The responsibility of that officer [the Q.M.G.] must be understood to be limited to the duty of making requisitions for certain stores, and not to their safe custody, stowage, or even issue."‡ The Report of the Commissioners (which we will call the "Crimean Report" in future, to distinguish it from the "Chelsea Report"—*i.e.*, that of the Board of General Officers who sat at Chelsea) went on to say:

* Crimean Report, pp. 25 and 26.

† "The Crimean Commission and the Chelsea Board," by Colonel Sir Alexander Tulloch, second edition, p. 47.

‡ Report of Chelsea Board, p. x.

"They [the rugs] continued to arrive by different vessels during the month of January, till the number amounted to 25,000; but, while the men are stated to have suffered severely for want of sufficient covering, the return of clothing received and issued from the Quartermaster-General's stores shows that the troops were supplied with only 800 out of 24,000."

Now, with regard to this the Chelsea Board stated that "Colonel Wetherall, in his evidence given to the Commissioners in the Crimea, informed them that in the month of December alone no less than 22,740 blankets were issued by the Department, though only 17,323 were carried away." They go on to state: "This portion of Colonel Wetherall's evidence was omitted by the Commissioners in their Report, but was laid before us by Sir Richard Airey."* This was an absolute untruth. "Colonel Wetherall never gave any such evidence to the Commissioners in the Crimea, nor anything like it."† It is not a deliberate untruth, as it was due to some muddling of evidence on the part of the old Generals, as Colonel Tulloch afterwards showed in his book; but when making such a serious charge directly affecting the good faith of the Commissioners in a Parliamentary paper, such carelessness is inexcusable.

The Crimean Report shows that out of 10,000 great-coats which were sent to Scutari as early as July, 1854, from England, 6,675 remained there till December; that by the end of November or beginning of December 12,000 great-coats had arrived at Balaklava, but though they were most urgently wanted, 9,000 remained in store, as well as 2,000 watch-coats.

The soldiers were without their knapsacks for the first six weeks after landing, and when they got them they had been rifled of their contents. The squad-bags had remained at Scutari. The soldiers had thus no change

* Chelsea Report, pp. xi and xii.

† "The Crimean Commission and the Chelsea Board," p. 53.

of clothing. The sick and wounded arrived in hospital unprovided with even a clean shirt, and the medical department had nothing of the kind to give them.

"In such a place as Balaklava nothing could be purchased," says the Crimean Report; the soldier "could neither wash nor change his clothes. His person, therefore, became covered with vermin, and where affections of the bowels prevailed, as was almost universal, the shirt rotted from filth, and had generally to be cut off his back when taken to the hospital at Scutari."

Scutari, where Florence Nightingale received many of these poor men in this state, was about thirty hours' journey by sea from Balaklava, and the men had first to be carried, or to ride from their camp to the transport.

"On the 28th November," says the Crimean Report, "the *Ottawa* had arrived at Balaklava, bringing 6,000 Militia coatees and 6,000 trousers, which had been despatched from England on receipt of intelligence that the clothing of the troops had suffered greatly from the operations of the siege. It might have been expected that these would have been distributed immediately, but the whole of the coatees and one-half of the trousers were still in store six months after their arrival."

It would be easy to multiply instances of inconceivable ineptitude, but it is obvious that the information to be found in the three bulky Blue-Books of the Roebuck Sevastopol Commission, one bulky Blue-Book of the McNeill-Tulloch Commission, one Blue-Book of the Chelsea Board of General Officers, innumerable leaders and articles in the *Times* and other newspapers, and, finally, the bundles of private letters among Sir John McNeill's papers of 1855-57, cannot be condensed into a few chapters of a one-volume memoir. We therefore have to leave unsaid a great deal which would be much to the credit of the Commissioners. Anyone desirous of

studying the subject should read Colonel Tulloch's book, a second edition of which was published in 1880, with a preface written by Sir John McNeill (who had purposely abstained from identifying himself with the first edition for the same reason that he refused to appear before the Board), in answer to some of the "misrepresentations" which, says the Duke of Argyll, are "embalmed in the History of the Crimean War by the clever but not very scrupulous pen of the author of 'Eothen.'"* In Colonel Tulloch's book the Chelsea Board's conclusions are disproved, and the fact that they aimed only at "whitewashing" the officers concerned was most conclusively shown. One instance will suffice. The bed-rock cause of all deficiencies was the want of forage: the absence of fresh meat, shelter, bread, fuel, hay, clothing—all was attributed by the officers examined, and especially by Mr. Filder, to the want of transport animals, and these were limited by the amount of forage available to feed them. Men starved upon unsuitable food because the baggage animals were too few to bring them suitable; horses laid down in slush and mud that nearly covered them, never to rise again, because material and tools to make shelter for them could not be carried to the horse-lines, nor could fodder reach them; rugs and clothing and lime-juice lay in store because there was no means of carrying them where they were wanted. Hay had been ordered from England, but did not come in sufficient quantities. Upon this the Chelsea Board threw the whole blame, exonerating everyone concerned except the Treasury, which should have sent more hay. Now, the baggage animals—horses, mules, and camels—having been purchased in the East, were not accustomed to hay; they were usually fed on chopped straw and barley. Any quantity of these could be obtained along the shores of the Bosphorus and Sea of Marmora, at one quarter of the price of hay from England. Sixteen sailing-vessels were lying idle all the winter at Mr. Filder's disposal; two of them would have been

* "Autobiography of the Duke of Argyll," vol. i., p. 460.

enough to bring over sufficient forage for 500 baggage animals for thirty-five days, leaving ample time to return for more before that was finished. Yet the Chelsea Board "humbly submit to Your Majesty that he [Mr. Filder, Commissary-General] does not appear to us to be justly responsible, as regards the supplies, for the unsatisfactory state of Your Majesty's Army in the Crimea during the winter of 1854-55."

CHAPTER XXV

THE CRIMEAN COMMISSIONERS AND THE PUBLIC

1856, 1857

It is not surprising that the Chelsea Report did not convince the public. The General Officers' faith in their own conclusions seemed to be doubtful, as they began their Report by saying that :

" The Inquiry which we were commanded to institute appeared to us to be—

" First, very peculiar in its nature, and one with which our military experience has not rendered us conversant, inasmuch as it was an inquiry in England into the correctness of conclusions which Sir John McNeill and Colonel Tulloch had founded on information obtained by themselves in the Crimea two years previously. . . .

" Second, it appeared to us to be attended with unusual difficulties, inasmuch as some of the statements which were to be inquired into were founded in part on evidence we had not the means of investigating ; and the attendance of several witnesses, whom it would have been desirable to examine, could not be obtained."

As the fallacy that the Commissioners were tools employed by the Government of the day, to shift blame from their own shoulders upon those of the officers, has been repeated so lately as 1903 by Field-Marshal Lord Wolseley, it is necessary to refer to it here. In " The Story of a Soldier's Life " he says, speaking of Lord Airey (vol. ii., p. 245) :

" In order to obtain some plausible, some specious ground for shifting the blame of all the miseries our soldiers had endured from their own shoulders to his, and

to make him and the other military chiefs in the field responsible for those miseries, the Cabinet in the autumn of 1855 determined to send two special Commissioners to the seat of war to inquire into the cause of our misfortunes during the previous winter and spring. Colonel Tulloch and Sir John McNeill, M.D., were selected for the purpose, and upon reaching Balaklava in March, 1856, they at once began to collect evidence." Speaking of the Chelsea Board, he goes on to say: "The prosecution broke down hopelessly, and ended in a fiasco that was almost comical." He adds that General Lord Airey told him that, "After he had delivered his opening address one of his traducers had such pains in his stomach he would never again appear before the Board, and that the other poor man, also refusing to attend, was heard of no more!"

Lord Wolseley's statements are rather loose. It was on 12th February, 1855, not in the autumn of that year, that the Cabinet determined to send out Commissioners. They arrived in the Crimea on 12th March, 1855, not 1856. The illness which prevented Colonel Tulloch continuing his ill-advised appearances before the Board was brain fever, not stomach-ache.* Sir John McNeill certainly took his M.D. degree in 1814, but custom and courtesy accord the use of G.C.B. after his name, which, like Lord Wolseley, he had received the right to use from Her Majesty Queen Victoria. Whether the "other poor man" was "heard of no more" this chapter will show.

The Opening and Summing-up Addresses of Sir Richard Airey before the Board were published in a separate volume in 1856; his excellent tone and eloquent words are very convincing. One who had not read Colonel Tulloch's reply would be satisfied that General Airey had completely exonerated himself. To come to a just conclusion, however, it is necessary to study both sides, and

* After Colonel Tulloch's breakdown in health, Dr. Graham Balfour, at the risk of all his professional prospects, and with not the least chance of any advantage, took up Colonel Tulloch's cause, and carried it through.

this it is evident Lord Wolseley, in his great admiration for his old chief, has not thought it necessary to do.

After Colonel Tulloch broke down on 5th May from over-anxiety, due to his exertions in attempting a task impossible except to a remarkably astute lawyer, great pressure was brought to bear in four separate attempts to get Sir John McNeill to take his place. The first was made by the Judge-Advocate-General ;* the second by Sir Richard Airey, requesting that he should be summoned as a witness ; the third through the official chief of his department, Sir George Grey, who, however, declined to interfere ; and, lastly, by Lord Panmure. Sir John McNeill was suffering from influenza at the time, and was able to give that as one reason for non-attendance, but added that he " could not have agreed to depart from the course he had hitherto taken " even if he had been in good health. What he felt was that, the Government having indignantly repudiated the imputation that they were putting the Commissioners upon their trial, he could not appear as a defender, and he certainly had no intention to appear as a prosecutor. He was of opinion that to take part in the proceedings at Chelsea, either as defender or prosecutor, must tend to drag down to the level of personal differences questions which he had never regarded, or desired to see regarded, in any other light than that of their bearing upon the welfare of the army.

As Lord Panmure had originally applauded Sir John McNeill's resolve not to appear before the Board, his change of view was unaccountable, till it came out that Lord Panmure himself was accused before the Board of having conspired with the Commissioners in producing a Report framed on purpose to throw blame upon other shoulders than those of the Government. The recent publication of the " Letters of Queen Victoria " and " The Panmure Papers " have shown how improbable this was, but the following statement by Sir John McNeill

* The Right Hon. C. P. Villiers, M.P., Judge-Advocate-General of the United Kingdom.

finally dispels an accusation so absurd that it is surprising it ever gained any credence :

To Colonel Mundy, War Department.

"GRANTON HOUSE,
"EDINBURGH,
"*28th May*, 1856.

"SIR,

"I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of yesterday transmitting to me, by direction of Lord Panmure, a printed copy of a portion of the evidence delivered by Maj.-General the Earl of Lucan before the Board of General Officers assembled at the Royal Hospital, Chelsea, and requesting, with reference to the statements therein made by Lord Lucan, that the Report, made by myself and Colonel Tulloch, was the joint production of Lord Panmure and of ourselves, that I will report to you, for His Lordship's information, whether or no there is any truth in those statements.

"In reply, I have to inform you that I am not aware that Lord Panmure ever interfered by authority, suggestion, or otherwise in regard either to the matter or the terms of any report to which my name is affixed.

"Lord Lucan appears to have founded his statements upon a misconception of a part of Colonel Tulloch's evidence, and I think it may therefore be proper that I should endeavour to state more clearly, than they appear to me to be brought in the evidence, the facts therein alluded to, and which Lord Lucan appears to have misunderstood.

"Colonel Tulloch had prepared two drafts, with a view to their being inserted in the Report dated January, 1856, but which were not inserted. Of these, one was founded upon certain states and other documents relating to the duty of troops, which Colonel Tulloch had himself obtained, conceiving that the information would be useful to the public service ; the other was founded upon certain returns of sickness and mortality obtained by the Commissioners.

"The subject of military duty appeared to me to be quite beyond the limit of our inquiry, and I explained to Colonel Tulloch the grounds upon which I could not consent to the insertion of his draft, regarding it, into the Report of the Commissioners. In my view of that question, when subsequently stated to Lord Panmure by Colonel Tulloch, His Lordship concurred. To the insertion of Colonel Tulloch's analysis of the mortality returns I had no objection, provided the subject were considered to be within the limits assigned to the inquiry by our instructions. On consulting Lord Panmure, from whom we had received our instructions, in regard to that question, His Lordship was of opinion that the subject was beyond those limits, and that he could not therefore with propriety receive from us, as Commissioners, a Report upon that subject. Colonel Tulloch's draft here referred to was not therefore inserted, and did not form any part of the Report submitted to Lord Panmure by the Commissioners. The two Reports which were laid before Parliament are in the precise form, word for word, in which they were presented to us by Lord Panmure, and I have good reason to believe that His Lordship had no knowledge whatever of the contents of either of the Reports till he read them in the form in which they were printed for presentation to Parliament.

"I am, sir, etc.,

"JOHN MCNEILL."

The Crimean Report had appeared in January; the Chelsea Report, purporting to upset it by exonerating all the officers, was issued in July. During these six months the interest evinced by the public was surprising. Behind the question of the Reports was the larger one of reform in army administration. The very class of high-born officers whom Prince Albert was rightly anxious to retain appeared to have utterly failed to meet their responsibilities. General De Lacy Evans brought forward a motion in the House of Commons to abolish the purchase

of Army Commissions; Lord Palmerston and Lord Panmure opposed this. The Crimean Report was the peg upon which those who favoured reform hung their various measures. The interest taken in the treatment by the Government of the Commissioners waned for some months, but revived, and became a national question when the towns of Liverpool, Preston, Bath, Manchester, and Birmingham presented them with addresses early the following year. A company of merchants of the city of Edinburgh had a special meeting to "express their unanimous opinion of the importance and value of the services rendered to the country," and to petition Parliament "to give expression to the feelings entertained throughout the country towards the Crimean Commissioners in such a way as your Honourable House may deem best; and, further, to address Her Majesty to confer some mark of her Royal favour on these distinguished individuals, worthy of the crown and the country."

The Press, especially the *Times*, went to extravagant lengths reiterating their praises. Six weeks before the Chelsea Report was issued Sir John McNeill had written to the Duke of Argyll:

Sir J. McNeill to the Duke of Argyll.

"*21st May*, 1856.

"It is possible, however, that the matter may not terminate with the Report of the Board of General Officers. Their opinion upon the matters in question may not be accepted by the country as conclusive, and the ultimate tribunal in all such cases is public opinion. I should be sorry to be forced to appeal to it, but if the Report of the Board is in keeping with the course of their proceedings, they may leave me no alternative."

It seems to the compiler of this Memoir that if the Duke of Argyll, Lord Palmerston, and Lord Panmure had been united in a feeling of consideration for, and loyalty to, Sir John McNeill, they might safely have

taken him into their confidence by explaining to him how the fears of Her Majesty and of the Prince Consort that Parliament would endeavour to usurp the control of the army, hitherto a prerogative of the Crown, was at the back of all that had happened ; Sir John's loyalty to the Crown, and his quality of being able to disregard public acknowledgment, would have made him willing, not only to have remained silent, but to have thrown the weight of his influence upon the side of putting an end to the popular outcry—that is, if they had been able to convince him that, in thus sacrificing his own credit, he would have benefited his country. They, however, offered no explanation—what the Duke of Argyll wrote in answer is not now among the papers, but certainly it cannot have been an explanation—cold silence was all that Sir John received. Colonel Tulloch's book was published in January, 1857. His illness had aroused much sympathy, and he had most flattering communications from Sir William Eyre and Miss Nightingale. " Throughout all military circles, except a particular clique at the Horse Guards, there was but one opinion on the subject." " It has given satisfaction to the public as well as to the officers in the Crimea." Such expressions, in letters, poured in upon the Commissioners. There was no need for Sir John to " appeal " to the public ; the public had already made up its mind. But, sore and angry at the, to him, inexplicable behaviour of the Government towards a public servant, he no longer kept silent by his fireside, but received the influentially-signed addresses offered to them, and spoke out in his replies.

In January, 1857, the first of the addresses, that from Liverpool, " signed by over one hundred leading gentlemen, holding various political opinions," was presented. The following are extracts from his reply :

" . . . I beg of you gentlemen to believe that I have received with gratitude, and that I will preserve with care, this unexpected record of your appreciation. Perhaps I may be permitted to add that its value is enhanced

by its being the only public document I possess which contains an acknowledgment that any service whatever was rendered by the Commissioners. . . . It was natural that, under the influence of those generous sentiments, you should attribute to us merits far higher than we could venture to claim; for it is a natural impulse of generous minds to magnify the obligations which they desire to acknowledge. . . .

"When I consented to proceed to the Crimea at the head of a Commission, I conceived that my duty to the country was in perfect accordance with the intentions and wishes of the Government. Lord Palmerston had urged the substitution of a Commission in the Crimea for the Committee of the House of Commons demanded by Mr. Roebuck, and had thus, as it appeared to me, pledged the Government to an unflinching inquiry. . . . The welfare of the British Army, the honour of Her Majesty's arms, the interests of the nation, in more than one quarter of the globe, and the success of the war, waged to defend the freedom of Europe, were all at stake in the Crimea, and I did not consider it possible that, at such a moment, anyone could give way to mere personal considerations. . . .

"What objects with reference to us and our Report may have been contemplated by H.M. Ministers in the course they thought proper to pursue, I do not pretend to know or to understand; but whatever their intentions may have been, their proceedings appear to have produced a very general impression that the acknowledged fidelity of our Report was not in accordance with their wishes. . . .

"Of the Report of that [the Chelsea] Board I need only say that I consider it a suitable result of the proceedings which led to it, and which are not calculated, I fear, to impress the people of this country with profound admiration of the taste, the feeling, or the spirit in which they were carried on. . . . I do not believe there is a single passage in our Report that can justly be regarded as implying or insinuating the slightest shadow of an imputation upon the motives of any man."

After enumerating the exceptional resources, command of the sea, etc., at our disposal, he continued :

" Yet the country is expected to believe that, with all these boundless resources and these means and facilities, it was impossible, by any exercise of talent, energy, and foresight, to provide either sufficient food or sufficient clothing for twenty or thirty thousand men, during their first winter in the Crimea."

The Address and the Commissioners' replies were published. To Mr. (afterwards Sir) William Rathbone, to whose initiative the address from Liverpool was due, Sir John McNeill wrote :

Sir J. McNeill to Mr. Rathbone.

"*30th January*, 1857.

" I find that my answer has attracted some attention, probably because I have been so quiet. People had, it is said, begun to think that there was some understanding between me and the Government, but now it is plain that there has been none. Your Address has forced me to speak, and, of course, I could speak only the simple truth."

To the same, a few days later :

" The Whig newspapers of Edinburgh have spoken out manfully, and even the Free Kirk organ, the *Witness*, has fallen foul of the Free Kirk Secretary of State for War."

Questions regarding matters connected with the Crimean Report continued to be asked in the House of Commons, and whenever any allusion was made to the Commissioners, as frequently happened, it was received with cheers ; but the Government steadily resisted making any sign of approbation or mention of reward.

On 11th February, 1857, the matter was again brought up by Mr. J. Ewart, who asked the First Lord of the Treasury if it was the intention of the Government to make any recognition of the services of Sir John McNeill and Colonel Tulloch. Lord Palmerston, constantly in-

terrupted by cheers, paid a tribute to the importance, the excellence, and the usefulness of the Commissioners' work, but he did so in rather a deprecating manner, adding :

" At the same time, it does not appear to Her Majesty's Government that their services were of such a peculiar nature as to require any extraordinary recognition. It may be, and must be, a question whether that usual acknowledgment which is made for special services shall not be made to them ; it will be our duty to consult with them upon the subject."

It was then exactly two years since the Government had asked them to undertake the inquiry, and one year since the result of it had been made public, yet the Head of the Government only allowed that it " may " or " must be a question whether " the " usual acknowledgment " should be made. Five days later Sir John wrote to William Rathbone :

Sir J. McNeill to Mr. Rathbone.

" *16th February*, 1857.

" The Government, according to Lord Palmerston's statement, are to consult the Commissioners. They will therefore, I presume, make some communication to me. . . . There seems to be a general impression among the Members of Parliament that Lord Palmerston spoke under some kind of restraint and difficulty—that there was some unseen influence which he could not overcome."

No communication was received, and the promised acknowledgment took the form of an offer, through Lord Panmure, of £1,000 each, certainly not after " consulting with " the Commissioners " upon the subject."

Now, Sir John McNeill was a Highlander, and to offer a Highlander money as a reward for voluntary service was in the old days, and still is even in these degenerate ones, to offer him an insult. Lord Panmure, too, was a Scotsman, but that is quite a different thing from being a Highlander ; and though his intention may have been

good, he must have known that he was offering a reward, of a less honourable nature than Parliament had asked for, to men of whom he had made use, and to whom he had promised support which he had not given—men who could not but feel that they had been treated without consideration and placed in a very ambiguous position, and for whom reward was demanded, not in their private, but in their public, capacity.

Lord Panmure to Sir J. McNeill.

"*20th February*, 1857.

"This grant is intended, not as a mere pecuniary equivalent for the results of your inquiries, but to convey likewise in the manner which appears to them most proper the recognition by Her Majesty's Government of the zeal and ability with which those inquiries were conducted."

The offer of £1,000 was indignantly refused by both Commissioners.

On 26th February the annual official returns issued by the War Office were published in the ordinary course, and the *Times* at once pointed out that they confirmed Colonel Tulloch's statistics, upon which doubt had been thrown at Chelsea.

On 2nd March the Government were defeated by sixteen votes, upon a motion regarding a war which had arisen in China, owing to an over-zealous official there having destroyed some Chinese forts, and a dissolution became imminent.

On 4th March, at the request of Mr. Layard, the correspondence between Lord Panmure and the Commissioners about the offer of £1,000 each was laid on the table of the House. The *Times* had a long and angry leader upon the subject.

"The assertion that to offer a gratuity of £1,000 was 'the manner' which appeared 'most proper' to reward the ready, laborious, and skilful services of a veteran old diplomatist and a Colonel in the army is certainly some-

thing new and startling. The higher departments of the public service are, we are accustomed to pride ourselves, filled by men who do not place pecuniary emoluments foremost among the objects of their life," etc.

Some of Sir John's friends wished him to be party to the agitation which was made to obtain more suitable rewards for the Commissioners. His attitude is well shown in the following letter, written in answer to one from Sir William Rathbone, who wished to show Mr. Ewart, M.P., a private letter from Sir John to himself, so as to give Mr. Ewart points for a speech he was about to make on the subject.

Sir J. McNeill to Mr. Rathbone.

"*6th March*, 1857.

"I hope you will understand my feelings when I say that I cannot take any measures to influence the proceedings of any member of Parliament on this question. . . . I have many personal friends in Parliament, some of whom have written to me about these matters, but I have uniformly declined to consider them as in any degree personal, or such as ought to be influenced by personal considerations. In that point of view they would be utterly insignificant, and I will not taint the discussion, whatever may be the result, by introducing into it any such element, neither can I consent to deprive myself of the satisfaction of feeling or saying that I have not done anything to give the discussion such a character either in Parliament or before the public. . . . The true question, and the only one worth fighting for, is—Will the country give to a public servant such support as will enable him, when employed as I have been, to tell the truth, or must he, if he does not desire to sacrifice everything for which men serve the public, disguise the truth and deceive the country? . . . Whether I am rewarded or whether Colonel Tulloch is rewarded are questions of no consequence. . . . If the country is prepared to fight that battle, let it be fought without regard of personal considerations and solely upon public grounds. . . . If the

Commissioners are to receive any suitable acknowledgment of their services it must be, so far at least as I am concerned, without any intervention of my own to produce that result; and therefore I am unable to consent to your conveying anything even in the strictest confidence from me to Mr. Ewart or to any other Member of Parliament."

On 12th March, much against the wish of the Prime Minister, the debate, which had been postponed for a short time, but not stopped by the offer of the pecuniary reward, took place, and this old and stale subject was the *raison d'être* of a series of speeches, as long, as heated, and as vigorous as ever.

The motion was proposed by Mr. Palk, seconded by Sir J. Fergusson, who was followed by Mr. Adam Black, M.P. for Edinburgh. He said that his constituents took great interest in this subject, and that he had presented three separate petitions—from the Lord Provost and Magistrates, from a company of merchants, and from the Dean of Faculties and members of the legal professions, clergy, and merchants—all urging the Government to bestow some mark upon the Commissioners.

Lord Palmerston then spoke, depreciating the value of the work done by the Commissioners, saying, "The motion of the hon. gentleman is not one which ought to be assented to by the House at the present moment"; that the speech of the hon. gentleman was all about an old story of what had happened two years ago, and "had passed into the domain of history"; that it was true that there were great-coats in store which had not been given out, and forage at Constantinople while horses were dying of starvation, etc.; but he dwelt upon the splendid state of the army, due to arrangements made by the Government, latterly and the satisfactory ending of the war. He hoped a division would not be forced.

Sir J. Fitzgerald supported Lord Palmerston on the ground that the inquiry was subversive of the discipline

of the army, and he " would never consent to a resolution which censured officers who acted under the authority of official superiors."

Mr. Peel followed. He did not agree with Lord Palmerston in thinking the time of the House wasted on this old question. He then referred to Colonel Tulloch's book, and said that he had spent two whole summers studying the subject. He had arrived at the conclusion that it was a mistake to throw blame upon individuals. " The chief cause was your commencement of a great war with little means," he said—" calamities . . . attributable, not to the heads of our military departments, but to the organization and arrangement of those departments." The services of the Commissioners had been exaggerated.

Sydney Herbert then rose, and his speech told.

" . . . The question we have now to consider is, not whether certain officers were to blame, not whether the Board of Officers at Chelsea were to blame, but whether two gentlemen who were sent from this country to discharge a most arduous and invidious duty did discharge that duty faithfully and ably ; and if so, has the country and has the Crown marked in an unmistakable manner their approbation of the services performed ? (Hear, hear.) I confess I heard with pain the noble Lord at the head of the Government speak depreciatingly of the services of those gentlemen." (Lord Palmerston denied having done so.) . . . " The noble Lord spoke of the Report of Sir John McNeill and Colonel Tulloch as being a valuable Report, but at the same time as not being more valuable than other Reports which were made," etc. He then referred to the fresh meat and bread supply, etc., and ended by moving as follows : " That Sir John McNeill and Colonel Tulloch ably fulfilled the duty entrusted to them of inquiry into the arrangements and management of the Commissariat Department ; and that, considering the able services rendered by them as Commissioners in the Crimea and the high testimony in their

favour of Her Majesty's Government, an humble address be presented to Her Majesty praying that some special mark of approbation be conferred upon them."

Sir John Pakington and several other members followed, and more rose to speak, but were received with shouts of, "Divide, divide! Question!"

Lord Palmerston, rising, then said:

"I had hoped to have had a more decided expression of opinion and feelings of the House upon the proposal of my right honourable friend, but if I am to infer from the calls for a division that the feeling of the House is decidedly in its favour—(cheers)—I shall not oppose it. I have no wish to stand between the generous feelings of this House and the accomplishment of its wishes. Nobody more heartily desires than I do that the services of these two gentlemen should be recognized. I did certainly think that the offer made to them was the more natural and appropriate acknowledgment of services of that description; but, at the same time, if the House is of a different opinion, I for one shall not go to a division. (Cheers.)"

The motion was agreed to without division.

The *Times* next morning had a very triumphant leader, some of which is worth noticing.

"'The events had passed,' said Lord Palmerston, 'into the domain of history.' So, unfortunately, has the decision of the Chelsea Commissioners; and therefore, if on no other grounds, it was important that the judgment of posterity should be better informed as to the merits of the case. We who have lived through the events are too painfully aware of the connection between the disasters in the Crimea and the incapacity of too many of the officers in high command. We, too, can perfectly appreciate the exact value of the gross farce which was played out at Chelsea. . . . Fifty years hence, however, the case may be different."

"We have then," continues the article, "as we may reasonably hope, at length fairly done with this dismal Crimean history. If anything were needed to add to the triumph of Sir John McNeill and Colonel Tulloch, it would be the period at which this address has been wrung from a reluctant Ministry. The Head of the Government is about to appeal to the country, and so completely was he aware of the real nature of the feeling out of doors upon the subject, that he did not care to face the constituencies without rendering justice to these two gentlemen."

Without attaching too much weight to the exaggerated language of the *Times*, one may justly say that Sir John McNeill's quiet and reserved dignity, his unwillingness to agitate or embarrass the Government, his high-minded determination to think only of the public aspect of the case, probably had their due influence upon the electors, who returned Lord Palmerston to power with a splendid majority so soon after.

With one last letter from the proud old Highlander, we, too, may have done with this painful inquiry.

Sir J. McNeill to Mr. Rathbone.

"Granton House,
"Edinburgh,
"*9th March*, 1857.

"My dear Sir,

"Many thanks for your letter just received. I am truly gratified to learn that Mr. E. has secured what, I happen to know, will be acceptable to Colonel Tulloch. In a letter which I had from him a day or two ago he mentioned that a third party, whom he did not name, had asked him what would satisfy him and me, observing that I had waived all claim. Colonel T. had replied that the Civil K.C.B. was the least he could accept, and stated that, when in my letter to Lord Panmure, of the 9th February, '56, I had waived all claim, matters were in quite a different position to what they were now. This was a very proper answer to make so far as I was concerned, and I told him

so, but added that I declined to hold any communication on the subject unless with a person who was authorized by the Government ; and in answer to his inquiry as to what would be acceptable to me I replied that I would not afford them even a pretext for alleging that I had asked or expressed a wish for anything whatever.

" If they feel the necessity of doing what is right, let them act like men and gentlemen. It is beneath both their position and mine to be chaffering and huckstering like Jew old-clothes men about such matters. If they do not feel that they have made a mistake, let them keep their honours and rewards. I can live without them. I do not choose to be bid for at auction. I have not put myself up for sale. I know Lord Palmerston well enough to say with confidence that he is quite incapable of pursuing such a course with any gentleman—for he is himself a gentleman, and of the highest class.

" Believe me to be,
" My dear sir,
" Very sincerely yours,
" JOHN MCNEILL."

On 17th March Lord Palmerston wrote : " I am authorized by Her Majesty to ascertain from you whether you would wish to be made a baronet or whether you would like to be made a Privy Councillor." Sir John replied that, his only child being a daughter and his means small, he would prefer to be made a Privy Councillor, which, he believed, " had been more exclusively conferred in consideration of public services."

Sir Alexander Tulloch, K.C.B., got his wish. He was in the House during the debate :

Sir Alexander Tulloch to Sir J. McNeill.

" *13th March*, 1857.

" Hayter, I understand, told Lord Palmerston that there would be a majority of 128 against him. He had no alternative, therefore, but to yield the point, and the

cheers of the House were most animating, particularly to one who, like me, had for three hours been anticipating a different result.

" I think it right to tell you that this morning Lord Panmure sent for me, and said that he had no ill-will against you or myself, that he could not explain the difficulties he had been placed in, but that they had been very great, and that now they were over he trusted that all would go on as before."

CHAPTER XXVI

LAST TWENTY-FIVE YEARS

1857—1883

For ten years more Sir John McNeill continued his public work as Chairman of the Board of Supervision. His interest in questions affecting the lives of the poor was unabated, and was not limited to the class with which he had officially to deal. In his opening address to the Edinburgh Philosophical Institution his subject was "The Working Classes," and in it he advocated the education of working men's children in "the guidance and management of the common affairs of life," such as thrift and its advantages, cleanliness and order, the relations of employer and employed, and the identity of their apparently conflicting interests, and kindred subjects which would "help to form their minds and determine their character."

The Volunteer Movement of 1859 had his hearty and liberal support, especially the Edinburgh Rifle Brigade, in which his friend the Hon. Bouverie F. Primrose became a Captain at his request.

During the American War of Secession the unemployed question was very acute in Glasgow, and also in Paisley, where mill-hands were thrown out of work. There was some agitation made to get legal provision for the able-bodied adopted under the Scottish Poor Law. This Sir John successfully resisted on the ground that as there was already power, in exceptional circumstances, to administer relief to the able-bodied, any alteration in the law was unnecessary. He also put down a well-organized Parliamentary and private attempt by Roman Catholics

to have Inspectors of the Poor chosen for their religious tenets rather than for their general suitability. He held that such appointments should be entirely unsectarian.

The Highland districts again called for help, the *Daily News* saying that " the shores of the Island of Skye would soon be strewn with a dead population " (!). The Rev. Archibald Clark wrote from Kilmallie Manse in 1864 :

" That the population of the Highlands and Islands still suffer from poverty frequently verging upon starvation is a fact too painfully known to need any proof. . . . Emigration confers the most important benefits on those who avail themselves of it ; but it leaves those who remain almost as helpless as they were before, and helpless they will continue to be so long as Gaelic continues to be their only language. Education appears to me to afford the only prospect of really and permanently benefiting the Highlanders. . . . I am convinced if our Highlanders were able to speak and write English fluently, and with this of course possess a knowledge of arithmetic, they would at once become independent."

For thirty-nine years—1871 to 1910—English and arithmetic have been learnt in every Highland school, yet a state of poverty bordering upon starvation still exists in some parts. Sir Charles Trevelyan and Sir John McNeill resumed their emigration work, and a number of unemployed mill-hands and Highland cottars went to Tasmania.

Sanitary legislation for Scotland, the Lunacy Bill, the Scottish Boundary Commission, consequent upon the passing of the Scottish Reform Bill in 1868, charitable societies, co-operation of charity and the Poor Law, hospitals, medical relief grant from Parliament, education, the General Road Bill, dwelling-houses for the working classes, the Marriage Affinity Bill (which he opposed), were all matters in which Sir John took part, or upon which he was asked to give a value opinion. The men with whom these matters brought him in contact were all leading men of their day. Among them may be men-

tioned the Duke of Buccleuch, Lord Dalhousie, the first and second Lord Dunfermline, Lords Broughton, Stanley, Camperdown, Curreyhill, Kinnaird, Redesdale, Sir George Otto Trevelyan, Sir Moses Montefiore, Sir William Gibson-Craig, Angus Fletcher of Dunans, Professor Blackie, and others, from all of whom there are letters on varying subjects among his papers.

In the unveiling and presentation to the city of Edinburgh of the statues of Professor Wilson and Allan Ramsay in 1865, Sir John McNeill and his brother, Lord Colonsay, took leading parts. When the Prince Consort laid the foundation-stone of the General Post Office in Edinburgh in October, 1861, it was Sir John McNeill who, on the stone being lowered into place, applied the square; and when, only five months later, there was a large meeting to appoint an acting committee for promoting a National Scottish Memorial to the memory of that same Prince, it was Sir John who was made vice-president. His literary activity, too, was for long in no way impaired, as letters from Mr. John Murray, Mr. Macpherson, and his successor, Dr. William Smith (editors of the *Quarterly Review*), Mr. Macvey Napier, Mr. David Douglas, etc., testify, till as late even as 1877, when he had reached the age of eighty-two. The following extract from a letter to Mr. Paget* shows Sir John's opinion of Lord Macaulay's work:

"Lord Macaulay is gone, but so were the men of whom he wrote, and his character as a historian is as much public property as were their characters with which he deals so freely. It is a more patriotic and a nobler purpose to rescue the reputation of our great men from unmerited condemnation than to hold them up unfairly to the execration, not only of the country which they served and exalted, but of the whole civilized world, and it is also a wiser course, for the characters of our truly great men are a valuable part of our national property, and to

* John Paget (1811-1899), police magistrate and author of "Paradoxes and Puzzles" and other essays in which Macaulay's history is severely criticized.

rescue that important part of our wealth from destruction is to confer a public benefit. Could it have been the feeling that, unless degraded, the great figure of Marlborough might or must overshadow even that of William, whom he had predetermined to make the hero of his drama, that led Macaulay to take so jaundiced a view of the great captain's character? That he had succeeded in persuading himself of the accuracy of the portrait he had drawn I should be slow to doubt, but there must surely have been some curious obliquity of moral vision to make this possible."

An honour which Sir John McNeill appreciated most keenly was that conferred upon him in February, 1857, by the Associated Societies of the Universities of Edinburgh in electing him as their Honorary President in the room of Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton. The Associated Societies is a union of literary and debating societies, which was instituted in 1833; the roll of its Honorary Presidents is an extraordinarily distinguished one. The University of Oxford created him a D.C.L. on the 24th June in the same year.

One subject we must notice rather more especially—the Nightingale Fund, and Sir John McNeill's part in it. At a meeting to promote the National Testimonial in honour of Miss Nightingale, held in Edinburgh in February, 1856, Sir John McNeill was called to the chair. In his speech, referring to the many conversations he had had with her, he said he had never heard a "vain or thoughtless proposal" from her, that she was distinguished by "a strong practical sense." He recounted how she had acquired instruction in attendance on the sick in Germany, as there was then no means of acquiring it in this country except in Roman Catholic sisterhoods. He and other speakers defended her from the malicious, sectarian, and political newspaper attacks which had been too frequent, they said, to pass unnoticed, and which arose from ignorance as well as from malevolence. At the

Crimean Banquet in the Corn Exchange in Edinburgh on 30th October, 1856, Sir John McNeill had the honour to propose Miss Nightingale's health. He told, as an eye-witness, of her deeds of mercy. Since then a generation has grown up who do not know, so it may be of interest to quote and summarize parts of his speech here.

After a long eulogy of the British soldier and some defence of his own Report, saying that if the Government wished the Inquiry to be a sham they had selected the wrong instruments for that purpose, he spoke of the sick, and the state in which they arrived at Scutari. "Who was responsible for the omission," he said, "it would be useless to inquire. Of course, nobody is to blame." (Laughter and cheers.) . . . "But though I am unable to tell you who was responsible for leaving the sick in that wretched condition, I am able to tell you who rescued them from it—Florence Nightingale." (Prolonged applause.) He went on to tell how she had provided linen for the numerous patients at her own expense at a cost of not less than £2,000 or £3,000; how she had arranged for having it washed; for having food well cooked; for having a large wing of the barrack hospital, which was so dilapidated as to be uninhabitable, repaired; how the workmen employed had struck because they were not paid, and the officer in charge of the work could not procure the money; how she advanced it out of her own pocket; how that building, still unfurnished, was immediately filled with sick and wounded, and when the hospital authorities refused to provide furniture she again purchased it herself. "Everyone," he said, "knows the public services of Florence Nightingale, but only those who have had the honour of meeting her can know the refinement and true feminine delicacy of her mind and manner, or the unconsciousness of having done anything great or remarkable that pervades her whole deportment and conversation. Far from dwelling upon the past, or taking any pride in the applause which has followed her unsought, the whole energies of her powerful, highly culti-

vated, and essentially practical intellect are always directed towards further and more permanent plans of usefulness."

It was for these plans—the establishing of a training school for nurses in this country—that Sir John gave his assistance. He was one of the nine original trustees, appointed by deed in 1857, who were nominated by Miss Nightingale to form a Consultative Council to advise her how to apply the funds which a grateful nation had subscribed as a gift to herself. As is well known, it was used to found the School of Training for Nurses, now St. Thomas's Hospital.

The honorary LL.D. degree was conferred upon him on Monday, 22nd April, 1861, in the Assembly Hall, Edinburgh. Professor Campbell Swinton, the Dean of Faculty of Law, in presenting him to the Vice-Chancellor, speaks of his " retrieving the disasters of a suffering army and restoring the confidence of an anxious nation."

The home-life of the McNeills continued as before, with one change, which was a source of great interest and pleasure to them both. On 8th March, 1858, their only child, Margaret Ferooza, was married to Lieutenant Duncan Stewart, R.N., eldest son of John Lorn Stewart, of Knockrioch and (afterwards) of Coll. The great happiness of this union brightened the declining years of Elizabeth Lady McNeill, and the advent of grandchildren was a source of joy to all. Mrs. Stewart continued to live with her parents, as her husband was frequently on foreign service. " We miss dear Duncan's cheery spirit very much," Lady McNeill wrote to Mrs. Paget in 1863 ; " we are getting and feeling very old, and our chief delight is in the children."

Numerous friends stayed at Granton House : among them may be mentioned Miss Nightingale and her cousins, Mr. and Mrs. Slough ; the Hope Scotts of Abbotsford ; Miss Catherine Sinclair ; Lady Emma Campbell ; Mr. and Mrs. Paget and their children—Nina, Guy, and Rosalind ; Mrs. Mower, known to the children as " Ma Mower "; and innumerable nieces and nephews. On New Year's Day

there was always a party of relations, and a haggis was part of the fare. Elizabeth McNeill was a noted housekeeper; her book of receipts contains many collected in other lands, such as "Taws Kabob," Persian recipe; "Fritto di Schienale (very delicate), from Signora Rosette"; "Swedish pudding; marochetti of lamb's or sheep's blood"; "Corstorphine Cream, copied from the original recipe of the old Ladies—inventors." There is a little book with lists of her subscriptions to charities, and her bookshelves contained many volumes on religious subjects. Among her papers is a scrap with the following resolves:

"For 1849—To become more active, less self-indulgent. Far more warmly grateful in heart for the great goodness of God towards me. More Christian in all my thoughts and practices. More devoted to every duty of my calling here. May God's grace help me to do so, for Christ my Saviour's sake! Sunday evening, 31st December, 1848.—E. McN."

She was no austere or melancholy Christian, but by her cheerful presence gladdened those who dwelt in the house, and drew the sometimes conflicting temperaments together in sympathy and accord. No one could make her husband laugh as she could, say those who remember the Granton days—and this was after forty years of married life.

On one occasion after her visit Miss Nightingale wrote:

Miss Nightingale to Lady McNeill.

"*22nd April*, 1857.

"I cannot tell you how I enjoyed my stay with you. I think Granton House is the most poetic place I ever saw. And your kindness I never can forget. I have often thought it was a compensation for our terrible failure that it brought us into communication with such people. As it was a compensation to our awful calamity that it brought out the endurance of our men. . . . Do you think you could make interest with Mr. Steell [the sculptor] to let

THE "BIG HOUSE" OF KILLORAN IN 1870.

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me have permission to take a photograph of his bust of Sir John McNeill ? . . . I was delighted to be able to say, in answer to an application similar to that of Mr. Steele to me yesterday, that I stood pledged to Sir John McNeill to dispose of my remains for the benefit of science only, and to go down to posterity in a bottle [of spirits of wine] if I am curious enough. It is at once becoming and professional to have my portrait thus."

In the spring of 1867 Lady McNeill had a long and severe illness, and Sir John, oppressed by anxiety, began to feel that his work was beyond his powers.

" I have been called upon," he writes, " to endeavour to get our sanitary legislation for Scotland put upon an intelligible and workable footing, besides carrying on my official duties and all the odds and ends one cannot escape from without being considered ill-natured."

He therefore thought it was time that he gave up his Board of Supervision work, and he did so in March, 1868, retiring after fifty-two years of work, " generally hard, often anxious, and sometimes very trying," at the age of seventy-three. In consideration of his " long and eminent services," the Government gave him the highest retiring allowance permitted under the Superannuation Act—*i.e.*, the equal of his full salary, £1,200 a year. Besides the very eulogistic minute recorded in the Board of Supervision's Proceedings, he received some touching letters from his subordinates, with expressions such as the following, from Mr. (afterwards Sir) William Walker of Boland : " The lively and affectionate interest which you have invariably evinced towards me . . . has been more like that of a father or an elder brother than of an official chief."

Lady McNeill for a time appeared to have recovered her health, but after a short illness, during which she was tenderly nursed by her nieces, Anne and Margaret Wilson, she died, " in perfect peace of mind and readiness to go," on 26th November, 1868. " She was," wrote Miss Nightingale to Mr. John Paget, " a woman of rare quality—

tested by endurance and by chance and change, which most stay-at-home English ladies never know." The blow to her husband was a very great one, and though he dwells in his letters more upon the sources of comfort that remained to him, and though he lived for years and enjoyed life to a considerable extent after this great loss, the marked change in his handwriting is a silent witness of what he suffered. The firm, strong, remarkably clear writing is touched by the slightly wavering lines of an old man's hand from this time onward. He spoke of himself as a " stricken old man who has now nothing to do but bide his time " in a letter of 8th December, but that vigorous life was still in him he unconsciously shows in the same letter : " I must make for myself some sort of occupation, however slight or desultory it may be, and try to reconcile myself to another life than that which I have led hitherto."

For two years the Granton home was carried on much as before, except that Lieutenant Stewart, having retired from the Navy with the rank of Commander, remained at home with his father-in-law, his wife, and five children. Sir John, however, could not " reconcile " himself to this life, and early in 1870 he went for a protracted visit to the Continent and a tour in Spain with John Paget. At Cannes, where he remained for a considerable time, and where the climate, he said, did him immense good, he frequently met, amongst other friends, Lady Emma Campbell, the sister of the Duke of Argyll. Her sympathy, her admiration for him, and his own loneliness, led to his asking her to share the remainder of his life. To this she consented, and in her he had a most devoted wife for nearly thirteen years. The wedding took place quietly at Inveraray on 26th August, 1870.

About this time Sir John McNeill acquired the islands of Colonsay and Oronsay from his brother, Lord Colonsay, and the Granton home was broken up in October, 1870. It was intended that Captain and Mrs. Stewart and their family should live in Colonsay, but the departure of Mrs.

Stewart and the younger children to so remote a place was deferred till her expected confinement should be over. This took place in Edinburgh in March, 1871, and though at first all seemed well, ten days after the birth of her third daughter Margaret Ferooza Stewart died.

"The blow has been a crushing one for me," Sir John wrote from Cannes, where he and Lady Emma had gone for the winter, "yet I think I grieve even more over the irreparable loss that Duncan and the children have sustained than over my own."

With his new family connection, Sir John's ever-ready sympathy and interest became engaged in all the affairs of the Argyll family, and to Lady Emma's nephews and nieces he was soon an uncle in affection as well as by marriage. Lord Lorne and his royal bride, Lord and Lady Percy and their beautiful children, the Duke of Argyll and the Duchess Elizabeth, the younger Argyll nephews and nieces, then unmarried, often stayed with them in Scotland or abroad. Every summer for some years the Stewart grandchildren from Colonsay spent part of the year with them. Sir John's great love of, and interest in, the welfare of his daughter's children was expressed in every possible manner while he lived. The presence of a nursery party in the house gave him great pleasure, the affection he had had for children all his life being in no way diminished; so marked, indeed, was it that, if no young relations were there, the children of the Rev. David Guthrie from the Manse were invited to play in the garden, so that the old man might see and hear them.

Sir John and Lady Emma spent each winter in Cannes, and each summer made Burnhead, a small house and grounds at Liberton, near Edinburgh, which they had bought, their headquarters, though they were often at Inveraray Castle and other places with friends and relations.

His interest in public affairs was keen to the end. His mind remained a wonderfully clear and powerful one for

a man of his advanced age. His correspondence with Mr. John Paget has been preserved, and from it it is difficult to select extracts which exemplify this power, because the letters are so numerous, so long, and include expressions of his views upon so many subjects. Perhaps the most interesting are those which show that Sir John followed, with a most minute observation, all the circumstances and negotiations which preceded the Treaty of Berlin. In November, 1876, at the age of eighty-one, he wrote :

" If Russia can obtain at the Conference all she wants for the present, we may have peace ; but if she is bent upon war, she will make such demands as we cannot advise Turkey to accept, and then we shall have war. I have no great confidence in the firmness of the French, German, Austrian, or Italian representatives. France, looking to a future quarrel with Germany, wishes to cultivate Russia. Bismarck, for like reasons, acknowledging Prussia's obligation to Russia during the war with France, and probably having an eye to the absorption of the German population of Austria if an opportunity should offer, will, I fear, desire to please the Tzar. Italy, fearing France and Austria, will probably cling to Germany and Russia ; and Austria, fearing Germany on the one side and Sclavism on the other, will be as neutral as she can. We shall, I fear, be left almost alone to face Russia amongst a body inclined to grant all that Russia may demand, because they desire peace at almost any price."

When, in 1878, Great Britain allowed a Russian army to approach so near to Constantinople as San Stephano, the old diplomatist was quite ill with anxiety. " I am perplexed and worried," he says, " to such an extent as in my position I have no right to be about the course people at home are taking with regard to the Eastern Question." His intimate knowledge and great grasp of European politics enabled him to weigh every circumstance, and he was seldom far wrong in his prognostica-

tions. " One of the most important elements in the calculations of the probabilities of peace or war is, it appears to me," he says, " the true feeling and intentions of Germany. If she has a strong leaning towards Russia, as many think that she—that is, the Emperor—has, her mediation may tend to complicate our position rather than to facilitate an amicable arrangement, and nothing could well be more dangerous for Western Europe than complete concert between those two Powers, both of which are eminently aggressive, and neither of which has been over-scrupulous in prosecuting its own aggrandisement. One would like to know what Bismarck's views really are, but he is not a man ' who has a window in his breast.' "

Of Mr. Gladstone, whom he knew personally, he wrote in August, 1880 : " His legislation seems to be designed to pull down the aristocracy of all classes, whether of rank or of wealth, and to set up the less intelligent masses, but this is only the beginning."

The war in Afghanistan was naturally a subject of special interest to him, and after weighing all the pros and cons, he approved eventually of the withdrawal of Roberts' army from that country, though, when Yakoob was in the British camp and believed to be faithful, Sir John had suggested to the Government that " after Roberts had taken Cabool he should destroy all its fortifications, and that we should insist on the removal of the seat of government from Cabool to Kandahar, which had at one time been the capital. This would have been the severest punishment," he said, " that could be inflicted on Cabool for the massacre of two of our diplomatic missions, and Kandahar being on the main and only available line on which a hostile army could approach India from Central Asia ; being also on the main line of commercial intercourse with India from those regions, while at the same time it was much more easily accessible to us than Cabool. . . . We should thus have greater security from hostile military movements. Any such scheme was,

however, frustrated by the infidelity of Yakoob. . . . Abdulrahman was without influence at Kandahar; all his power and influence lay in the North-Eastern provinces."

His last letter to Mr. Paget was written in August, 1882, just before he entered his eighty-eighth year. It consists of six pages, chiefly about the position in Egypt during the rebellion of Arabi Pacha, and the state of Ireland.

Sir J. McNeill to Mr. John Paget.

"The Turks, it seems, are yielding to our demands, however reluctantly, but are evidently sore at heart, and their newspapers are, I observe, abusing us. . . . There seems to be some amelioration in the condition of Ireland, and although I think there are needless objections to the Arrears Bill, I confess that I am glad to see the conflict between the two Houses amicably terminated."

In religion Sir John was a deep and earnest Christian, one who lived his belief consistently rather than one who made profession in words. He cared not for the form, and was wedded to no sect. During middle life he attended St. John's Episcopal Church in Edinburgh, sitting under Dean Ramsay, but after his marriage to Lady Emma Campbell, who was a very strong Free Church-woman, and one of those who had "gone out" at the Disruption, he went with her to the Free Church at Liberton and to the Scottish Presbyterian Church at Cannes. Quite recently (on 29th December, 1909) the semi-jubilee of Mr. Minto, the minister at Cannes, has been celebrated. When called upon to give some reminiscences of the past, he said there was one member of his congregation he could not forget—"Sir John McNeill, a splendid man, retaining his ancient vigour, who used to sit with earnest, listening face in the old church at the Rue de Fréjus."

When the "Life of the Prince Consort," by Sir Theodore Martin, was published, Queen Victoria gave Sir John McNeill the first volume with her own hand, sent him the second through the Princess Louise, and sent him the

third inscribed by herself, "In remembrance of former days." The pleasure which this compliment gave him was somewhat marred by finding that his own name was introduced in a way which, quite unintentionally, discredited the Crimean Commissioners by upholding the Chelsea Board's conclusions. When this was pointed out to Sir Theodore Martin by his friend Mr. John Paget, he was sincerely distressed, but, as the book sold rapidly, four editions had been printed before this flaw had been brought to his notice. He delayed the printers at work on the fifth edition in order to introduce a note on p. 500 of the third volume, which was entirely satisfactory to all who were interested. Sir Alexander Tulloch was dead, but his widow had felt the matter very keenly, and the following letter from Miss Nightingale to Lady Tulloch shows what a strong supporter she, who had good cause to know, had been of the Commissioners throughout:

Miss Nightingale to Lady Tulloch.

"25, South Street,
"Park Lane,
"*23rd February*, 1878.

"My dear Lady Tulloch,

"I give you joy, I give us both joy, for this crowning recognition of one of the noblest labours ever done on earth. You yourself cannot cling to it more than I do; hardly so much, in one sense, for I saw how Sir John McNeill's and Sir A. Tulloch's reporting was the salvation of the army in the Crimea. Without them everything that happened would have been considered 'all right.' Mr. Martin's note is perfect, for it does not look like an afterthought, nor as prompted by others: but as the flow of a generous and able man's own reflection and careful search into authentic documents, and it also brings back the reader into the current of the subject, the Prince Consort, to show that he, too, recognized the Report and its truth and value. Thank you again and again for sending it to me. It is the greatest consolation I could have had. Will you remember me gratefully to Mr. Paget and

also to Dr. Balfour? I look back upon these twenty years as if they were yesterday, but also as if they were a thousand years. Success be with us and the noble dead, and it has been success.

"Yours ever,

"FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE."

It was most probably this revival of old questions which made Lady Tulloch publish a new edition of her late husband's book, "The Crimean Commission and the Chelsea Board." To it Sir John added a preface, which included a notice of some of the errors made by Mr. Kinglake in his History of the war. This preface, to which we have already referred on p. 380, is a wonderfully vigorous piece of writing for a man of eighty-five years of age. Sir John presented a copy of the book to the Army Medical School at Netley in December, 1882, and, in addition to the very gracious acknowledgment from the Professors, he received a private letter from Professor Thomas Langmore, who was personally unknown to him, saying:

"I served in the Crimea from the beginning to the end of the campaign as Surgeon of the 19th Foot, and having, therefore, been able to appreciate the immense value, in the interests of truth and sanitary science, of your and Colonel Tulloch's investigations and Report, I am now also able to estimate the opportuneness of the republication of Colonel Tulloch's review, with the addition of your remarks as a foil to Mr. Kinglake's verbose and mischievous account of the disastrous sickness and mortality, which he has designated the 'winter troubles' of the army. It almost appears as a providential arrangement that you have been spared to do this great service."

This letter must have reached him during his last illness. The annual move to the Villa Poralto at Cannes was made in November, 1882. On the 7th, in Paris, Sir John was taken ill; they reached Cannes on the 11th,

SIR JOHN McNEILL.
From bust by Sir John Steel.

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and he lingered for six months, till 17th May, 1883. Towards the end his mind wandered, and he often imagined himself back in the saddle, enduring fatigue and hunger, and eagerly pressing on towards Herat, or upon some Persian route riding his favourite Arab, "Hamandieh." Elizabeth's name was often on his lips. The repetition, in her beautiful cultivated voice and diction, by his wife, Lady Emma, of the many hymns and Psalms and paraphrases which she knew by heart was what soothed him most, and so he slowly sank to rest.

Of Sir John McNeill's personal appearance little has been said in this Memoir, but there are still many who can remember the tall and dignified figure, crowned with abundant white hair, worn rather longer than is now the fashion, so often to be seen in Edinburgh. "He was the handsomest young man and the handsomest old man I have ever seen," said Mr. Paget to Sir John's granddaughter. G. F. Watts painted his portrait, and, at the earnest request of Elizabeth, Duchess of Argyll, the friend of both artist and sitter, gave it to her instead of keeping it for his statesmen's gallery, as he had intended. "In him," said an article in the *Scotsman* in the year 1904, "Watts found a rare type in one who was considered the handsomest man of his day." Of a bust of Sir John done by Steell in 1858, Miss Nightingale wrote to Lady McNeill:

Miss Nightingale to Lady McNeill.

"I must write a word myself to thank you for the photographs from Steell's bust. The original I liked better than any portrait in marble I have ever seen, except Thorwaldsen's Byron (which was a very inferior subject). . . . You may depend upon it that that mouth would go through fire and water—the 'baptism of fire'—for the Right, and yet it has all the gentleness of the really great."

In levée dress, and wearing the rich cherry-coloured satin mantle with the collar of his Order, as he did on such

an occasion as the Investiture of the Order of the Bath, which was held by the Prince of Wales (now King Edward VII.) on 8th June, 1865, he can hardly fail to have been one of the most striking figures in the young Prince's presence.

The subject of writing his biography was broached during Sir John's lifetime. In August, 1870, Mrs. Stewart wrote to Mr. Paget :

" I am anxious to speak to you about a long-cherished wish of mine that my father's life should be written, and I believe you to be the most fit person I know to do it. I should be more obliged to you than I can express if you would undertake to do it. . . . He wished to burn all the papers, but I would not let him, and undertook the task of arranging them myself. I know you love him, and will not wonder that I think him as perfect in his private as in his public character, and have this wish, that his words and deeds should be handed down as an example to my children."

Mr. Paget agreed to do it, but Mrs. Stewart's death and some difficulty made by Lady Emma McNeill prevented the fulfilment of her wish. Of the scheme Sir John himself wrote :

" I still think that nothing but the affectionate partiality of friends could have led anyone to suppose that a memoir of my life could be considered a suitable undertaking. But as they wish it done, and you are willing to undertake what I am sure the ' reading public ' will regard as a work of a class of which they have had rather too much, I shall do what I can to furnish you with the requisite material."

Sir John McNeill's prominence before the public and his popularity have led to a curious claim being made just twenty years after his death. In an article which appeared in an American newspaper, the *Ladies' Home*

Journal, of November, 1903, entitled " Mrs. Eddy as she Really Is," and which especially claims to be authentic because the great Christian Science leader had herself seen it in proof and given it her full approval, is the following statement :

" Among Mrs. Eddy's ancestors was Sir John MacNeil, a Scottish knight, prominent in British politics, and Ambassador to Persia. Her great-grandfather was the Right Honourable Sir John MacNeil, of Edinburgh, Scotland. Mrs. Eddy is the only survivor of her father's family, which bore the coat-of-arms of the ancient MacNeils."

Mrs. Eddy is said to have been born on 16th July, 1821 ; Sir John McNeill was born on 12th August, 1795. His only married grandchild is the compiler of this Memoir, and Mrs. Eddy is certainly not her daughter. These facts were put before Mrs. Eddy soon after the article appeared, with a request that she would give publicity to a corrected statement. The only quasi-public correction, however, made by her was a paragraph in the *Christian Science Sentinel* of 12th March, 1904, which said :

" Mrs. Eddy has had this matter carefully investigated, and, having obtained no positive proof [!] that the Right Honourable Sir John McNeill was her ancestor, she requests that all others writing upon her biography shall in future observe this correction."

It would be interesting to know what Mrs. Eddy considers would constitute " positive proof " that she is not the great-granddaughter of a man born twenty-six years before herself, or that he could be described in any way as " her ancestor " through her father, whose name was Baker.

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